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VILLAGE BELLES.

A NOVEL.

G. WOODFALL, ANGEL COURT, SKINNER STREET, LONDON.

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VILLAGE BELLES.

CHAPTER I.

AN INVITATION.

"Lose her sight! how very dreadful!—" exclaimed Rosina, only imperfectly hearing what was passing between her mother and a little knot of village acquaintance.

"My dear, you mistake.—Her sight may be saved, Mrs. Good tells us, provided she will submit to the operation of couching."

"But still, at her age, with so much timidity and dislike of confinement.—It is very terrible, is it not?" cried Rosina, turning to Anne Greenway. "Poor old Lady Worral! I pity her exceedingly."

"Yes, I should dread the couching beyond every thing!—The eye is so susceptible of pain! I had a cousin once—"

"My dear Anne! surely any pain would be preferable to blindness! Even to a cultivated

mind, it must be a terrible trial; but to one who has *no* mental resources, whose life has been a life of walking, and card playing, and sewing, and knitting, what mere pain can be so intolerable?"

"Well, every one has their own way of feeling. I would rather bear an evil of which I already know the extent, than tempt one which is awfully obscure."

"That is, you think you would, if you were Lady Worral, rather remain blind all the remainder of your days, than submit to the pain of an operation."

Mrs. Wellford and Hannah proceeded to call on Lady Worral, while Rosina accompanied the Miss Greenways in a walk to Heeley. The old lady, whose decaying sight had for some time made her an object of compassion, was quite resolved to travel to London very shortly, and place herself under the hands of an oculist. Hannah admired her constancy of purpose and cheerful spirits. "As I said to Mr. Good," proceeded her ladyship, "'Mr. Good, a journey of a hundred and twenty miles to a woman of my age, let me tell you, is no trifle.' 'Pshaw! my lady,' says he, 'we may hunt for a good while without finding a woman of your age, as young as you are.' Ha, ha, ha! My spirits keep me up, you know. I *am* a young woman at seventy-four; but seriously, Mrs. Well-

ing itself. I'm not in a condition to help myself, you know, and really believe I've grown something of a coward. Besides, I now want a companion. People often wonder I don't engage one; but to my mind, hired companions are always horrid, sly, flattering, crafty wretches—I never could bear a toad-eater. There's Mrs. Barker, who comes to me every two or three years; she suits me better than the whole tribe of them. I'm never afraid of any design or double dealing in her, for we never part without a quarrel. However, one don't want a friend to snap at one, when one's going to submit to an operation, therefore I shall not write to Nancy Barker this time unless I can't better myself. Sir Philip Worral and his daughters are unluckily in Scotland—perhaps not unluckily either; for I should not be fine enough for them, and they would be too fine for me. There's my nephew Oliver's widow, again, would be glad to take me in, but then she has a dreadful large family; and I can't bear the noise of children. Besides, she does not live *in* London, only *near* it; far enough, I believe, to be at a very inconvenient distance from the oculist. Therefore my plan is, not to trouble any of my relations at all, but to take furnished lodgings for a month, so as to be quite independent; for without independence, Mrs. Wellford, there's no comfort in the world. And by

way of a companion, what say you, Hannah, if I take you?"

"Me, madam!" said Hannah, with a start.

"Ay, you. What do you think of it, Mrs. Wellford? Can you spare me the girl?

"As to sparing her," said Mrs. Wellford,—taking it for granted that Hannah would not think of accepting such an invitation for a moment,—"Hannah can never be very well spared—"

"Pshaw! stuff and nonsense!" interrupted Lady Worral with vexation, "Mr. Russell tells me that Hannah is very much altered, and looks pale and thin. Nothing will do her so much good as change of scene. I'll bring her back to you quite a different thing. All girls love London. It's natural girls *should* love London. It is not every one I would offer to take with me. I would not undertake, now, to carry Rosina to town: for she is such a flighty young thing that I should never have a moment's peace, whether she was in my sight or out of it. But Hannah and I know each other's ways—she will suit me very well. Besides, this will be such a nice opportunity for her to see Matthew; and the pantomimes are not over yet, and Captain Worral is in town, at least I believe so, and will be happy to squire her about whenever she feels dull."

"Dull! oh, I should not dread being dull," said

Hannah, " your ladyship has always been such a kind friend to me that I should be glad of an opportunity to prove myself grateful; only—"

" Let me hear none of your *onlys*. There's sure to be an *only* in the case when people are talking of being grateful. Consider of it with your mother as you go home; and if you *won't* oblige me, why let me know in time, that I may write to Nancy Barker."

Great was Rosina's surprise when she learnt that there was even the remotest probability of Hannah's accompanying Lady Worral to London. Her surprise was increased on perceiving that her mother rather wished her to go, and that Hannah discussed the scheme without visible reluctance.

" Certainly," exclaimed Rosina, " London is a place which every one must wish to see; but the fact is, that, with Lady Worral, you will *not* see it! She is neither fond of gaiety nor in a condition to enter into it, if she were; and as to making any contrivance for *your* amusement, independent of herself, such a thing would never enter into her head. You will be a close prisoner in some tall dismal house, with dusty furniture and dirty windows, afraid to walk out by yourself, and with nothing to do in doors but to listen to Lady Worral's conversation, which you might do equally well in Summerfield."

"If I accept the invitation," replied Hannah, "it will be more for Lady Worral's sake than my own. It seems forlorn for a woman so old and infirm, to undertake such a journey, and for such an object, without some female companion."

"But do you really think you could sacrifice to her a month, a whole month?"

"Yes," said Hannah, smiling, "I think I could achieve such a sacrifice, formidable as it appears to your imagination."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear," said Mrs. Wellford, leaving the room.

"To be sure, you will see Matthew," said Rosina, musingly.

"Yes, I shall see Matthew, and I shall have change of scene. You do not know, Rosina," said Hannah, hastily, "how much I want a change!"

Almost regretting she had acknowledged so much, Hannah laid down her work and went up stairs; and Rosina, after five minutes' consideration, settled it to her own mind that since Hannah *did* want a change, it would perhaps be as well for her to accompany Lady Worral. She longed to know whether Hannah secretly hoped to see Huntley again, or whether, without any hope in the case, they would accidentally meet. What changes such a meeting might occasion!

The love of romance made Rosina almost wish that a reconciliation *might* take place; for early partiality blended with the feeling that poor Mr. Huntley had been very unfortunate, had not yet quite given place to the convictions of sober reason. It was settled, in short, that Hannah was to go. Rosina could not imagine how in the world she should do without her; but in the mean while, was contented to lend her best assistance in amplifying her wardrobe, and in imagining all sorts of adventures for her, in spite of her conviction that she *could* have no adventures under the guardianship of Lady Worral.

When Mr. Russell heard of the intended journey, he was far less easy to pacify than Rosina.

"Hannah going to London," exclaimed he. "What can possibly have procured her consent to such a plan?"

"Lady Worral wished her so earnestly to agree to it," said Rosina.

"But had Hannah no opposing wishes?" interrupted he. "Is she not a free agent? Has Lady Worral no female connexions of her own? What necessity can there be for Hannah's accompanying her? What pleasure can she expect?"

"No pleasure that I know of, Mr. Russell, beyond that of performing a very kind action, and

of seeing Matthew. What greater pleasure could she promise herself here?"

Mr. Russell sighed. "When are they to leave us?" inquired he.

"On Tuesday. Lady Worral has engaged a furnished house in Welbeck Street for a month."

"So long! Surely her eyes will have recovered from their couching long before the end of a month!"

"I believe that is not certain. Besides, after travelling so far, Lady Worral will probably be in no hurry to return till she has seen her old friends and enjoyed the recovered use of her sight in various shopping expeditions. She has an old teapot to mend, and old chintz to match, some old jewellery to exchange, and a new shawl to buy."

"Yes, I can easily imagine," said Mr. Russell, "that so much time will be agreeably frittered in these and similar little errands, that Hannah will not return to us before the end of the spring."

"If *I* were in the case, it is possible that I might serve my country friends the trick of sending word by every post that I was coming home, and yet yielding to each fresh temptation of gaiety; but Hannah will have few such temptations, added to which, she is not one who can easily be tempted. Besides, why should we be anxious to

curtail her season of enjoyment, if enjoyment it proves?"

"Ay, now you are speaking candidly," said Mr. Russell, with a little vexation. "I was wrong in supposing Hannah too unlike young ladies in general. A visit to London was not to be resisted."

"But, Mr. Russell! Can you give her no credit for charity and good nature?"

"Yes," said he, softening, "for a great deal of both. More than falls to the share of almost any one I know. But we are apt to be deceived by our own motives."

"And pray, what motive are you influenced by now?"

"That is an unkind cut, Rosina. I trust, not a selfish one. However, you have properly reminded me that this is no affair of mine." And Mr. Russell wished her good morning. Rosina could not deny herself the amusement of repeating the dialogue to Hannah, who, accordingly, when next they met, asked him with a smile, "what made him apprehend that she should not return to Summerfield the same Hannah that she left it?"

"Do *you* feel quite secure," said he, equivocally, "that you shall return to Summerfield the same Hannah Wellford that you are now?"

'Hannah *Wellford:*' ah! there's the rub, thought Rosina.

"By no means," replied Hannah, with more gaiety than usual, "I expect to return with so much to say, that from being very quiet, you will find me transformed into a great talker. I expect to be in stronger health and better spirits, and fonder of Summerfield than ever. You need fear no worse change in me than this," she added, more seriously. "Do you know that I am almost three and twenty? My character must be pretty well fixed."

"Pardon me, that is a very unwarrantable inference. Fixed! Who can boast that their character is fixed? Every new event brings new temptations, which no previous self-study can tell us to a certainty how we shall withstand. Our minds, like our bodies, are constantly changing. The alterations in both are imperceptible to us, but not the less certain. Therefore do not, Hannah, put too much trust in your character being *fixed*, even at the mature age of three and twenty!"

"I will not, since you warn me," replied she.

"And do you anticipate much pleasure from this visit?"

"Perhaps not *much*. I look forward with rather a morbid desire for something new—even though that something new be only Lady Worral's

sick room, and blue bed furniture instead of white. I never had this feeling before; I hope I never shall again."

"I hope not," said Mr. Russell, pressing her hand with emotion as he rose to take leave. "I hope you will find that improvement in health and spirits in town, which is usually sought for in the country; and that when you return to us, you will be able to say with sincerity, 'It is good for me to be here.'"

Thus they parted; and it was evident to Rosina that he could have said much more if he would; and that his anxiety for Hannah was in fact a little shade of jealousy springing from a deep and pure source. The same idea did not occur to Hannah; indeed she took no thought on the matter: there was an accent of affection in Mr. Russell's tone which had touched her; but her thoughts were too intent on her approaching separation from her mother and sister, to be wasted in speculating on Mr. Russell's looks, or Mr. Russell's feelings. Hannah did not choose to own how cowardly she felt as the parting moment drew near, since it would only have given unnecessary pain; but her heart nearly failed her when she found herself really, and for the first time, on the eve of leaving Summerfield.

Mrs. Wellford, though disowned by her father's

family ever since her marriage, had by no means been on bad terms with the whole circle of her relations. Some, whose residence had more immediately connected them with the proprietors of Park Place, had indeed withdrawn their countenance from her; but there were sundry cousins on the maternal side, who had always been perfectly willing to keep up terms of good feeling with the vicar's wife through the medium of parcel and letter. One or two of these, residing in London, had already been kind to Matthew; and to these goodnatured though not very affluent relatives, Mrs. Wellford now wrote, to introduce Hannah to their notice and kind offices. One of the epistles was directed " To Mrs. Dawes, Grenville Street, near the Foundling;" another " To Miss Martha Wilkins, Cheyné Walk, Chelsea."

CHAPTER II.

A JOURNEY TO LONDON.

THE travellers arrived without accident or adventure at their journey's end, and were sufficiently fatigued to be glad to retire early to bed. Rosina had exacted a promise from Hannah, to write, if it were only a line, the same evening that she reached London; and Hannah was punctual to her engagement, though she could only say that she was very sleepy, that the air seemed very heavy, and that the house, though in the middle of London, did not seem *very* dirty. She committed her letter, together with a note to Matthew, to the footman, with injunctions to put them into the post office, and then went to bed, too weary to dream even of Summerfield.

On the following morning, as Lady Worral now breakfasted in her own room, Hannah found herself condemned to a solitary meal, and she was sitting down to it with rather dreary feelings, when Mrs. Sally, who was carrying her mistress's tea

and toast from the table, made a prodigious clatter of spoons and earthenware as she ran against some one in the doorway, and in another instant, Hannah was in her brother's arms. As soon as he had taken a hasty kiss, he turned to examine what mischief he had done, begged Mrs. Sally's pardon, told her she looked quite blooming, hoped no china was broken, observed that another cup of tea could soon be made, and officiously buttered a slice of toast to replace that which he had spoilt. All this was the work of a few seconds; Mrs. Sally left them alone, and then, Matthew drawing his chair close to Hannah, declared himself delighted to see her, and made a thousand inquiries after those whom she had left behind.

"Well, and how do you like London?" was his next question.

"How can I tell yet?" replied she, laughing. "I can only say that we rattled through a great many streets last night which were very brilliantly lighted, and that this seems a very nice house."

"To be sure, that *must* be all; and yet, Rosina, even out of that little, would have filled a sheet of writing paper. What fluency that girl has! I really wonder at the letters I receive from her sometimes. My mother's, though they are as long, don't surprise me half so much, because her head is always so full of us boys and girls that she can

never give us too many cautions, but, positively, Rosina's letters are all *narration*. Harry, again, is a powerful fellow at his pen, and his is the *imaginative* style; so that, no offence to you, Hannah, you and I are the only bad letter writers in the family.—But now, what is to be done?—Here are you in London, desirous, of course, to see every thing that is to be seen; and——"

"Oh no indeed! I have brought no such extravagant ideas with me. I came merely to attend on Lady Worral, and be quite quiet."

"That will never do. You can't be quiet, here, unless you tie up your knocker and throw straw before your door; and even then the fellows with hand organs will make a point of coming to serenade you in order that they may be paid to go away, as I saw a footman doing just now in the next street—a plan which answers, by the by, just like that of the Romans paying the barbarians to make themselves scarce—that is to say, they come again with increased force. Quiet! no, no, my dear; folks don't come to London for quiet—you might have had that at Summerfield. Lady Worral will spare you now and then, and I shall take you to Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and the British Museum, and the National Gallery, and the British Institution, which luckily is just opened with a collection of modern paintings, and

one or two panoramas and other things of the kind, just to give you a faint idea of what London will be, two months hence. You must hear the Horse Guards' band too, and see the Tower, St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, in spite of their vulgarity—"

"But, my dear Matthew, are all these fine things to be seen for nothing?"

"Why no," said he, looking grave, and putting both hands in his pockets, "not *quite* all; but there's something which jingles *here* you see, still, Hannah; and if I *do* part with a little small change, it shall not be said that I sent you back to Summerfield without shewing you a few lions."

"A little small change! I fear, Matthew, you are not so rich as to be able to think so indifferently as you affect to do, even of a little small change."

"Oh, but I assure you—"

"And I assure *you* that a very small portion of the fine things you have named will more than content my curiosity. In the first place, you know, there is the couching in store, which will preclude much thought of amusement till it is fairly over; and after that, I must take the earliest opportunity of calling on Mrs. Dawes and Miss Wilkins."

"Mrs. Dawes! take care, Hannah, how you get among those Daweses. They are a horrid set. Oh, you need not look so frightened; they are merely vulgarians. However, seriously, they are not people of our sort at all, and I wish we could cut the connexion. Could not you keep yourself nicely incog. now, and avoid letting them know you are in town?"

"No, mamma has given me a letter to Mrs. Dawes; and I am sure she would be displeased if I were not to call on her."

"Well, we must make the best of it," said Matthew, helping himself to a second roll with a sigh; "besides, Patty Wilkins would not keep the secret, and you must not cut cousin Patty. She is a nice, honest, affectionate soul, cousin Patty,—though a confirmed old maid. I'll row you to Chelsea some fine afternoon, and we will drink tea with her. I look in on her now and then, when I go up the river, botanizing, and she always makes much of me. By the by, I think an old maiden aunt is generally more inclined to pet her nephews than her nieces. How do you like London bread, Hannah? You don't know what you are eating. Two steam engines kept constantly at work, you know, grinding Derbyshire spar to adulterate the flour."

"Nonsense."

"True, on my honour. Take care how you use that milk. Nothing but chalk and water, with a little skim milk just to heighten the deceit and a little treacle to colour it."

"No?"

"Nothing more certain! Then, as to these eggs. *I* venture on them, you see; a medical man eats every thing with impunity, but they are French."

"French!"

"New laid this time twelvemonth. Sent over in lime. Have you Thames or New River water here?"

"I do not know."

"New River, I should hope. It makes very fair tea. If you were to see the gas oil that is sometimes floating on the Thames, any thing but '*beautifully* blue', to say nothing of— But you don't eat, Hannah? Allow me to spread you a slice of toast."

"No more, I thank you."

"An egg, then."

"No, I thank you."

"Ha, ha, ha!—But I have not spoilt your breakfast, Hannah, have I?"

"No; luckily I had finished before you began your description of what we were eating; which to tell you the truth, I do not half believe."

"'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise,'" observed he mischievously.

"Hark, there is some very good music," said Hannah, rising and going to the window.

"Very good music, but it is horribly vulgar to listen to it," said Matthew following her, and looking down on a band of German musicians who had attracted a small crowd. "However, as you are a rustic, Hannah, we will waive the vulgarity, and look out on the 'little pe-o-ple below.' See that gouty old fellow over the way in the room with pink curtains, loitering over his chocolate and the Morning Post. There's a young lady come in now. Oh fie! in curl-papers. Really her figure is not unlike Anne Greenway's. Pray, how is Anne? As fond of laughing as ever? Sam seems to have been at the Greenways pretty often, lately."

Matthew lounged away the morning with his sister till Lady Worral came down stairs and received him very graciously. He talked so gaily to her of newspaper anecdotes and professional chit-chat, as to amuse her very much; and she bade him come to breakfast, dinner, or tea as often as he could; a command which Matthew was right willing to promise compliance with. After reading her the Morning Herald, advertisements and all, he found he had no more time to spare; and

took leave. He had scarcely gone when a little poney chaise containing two children and driven by a lady, stopped at the door, and immediately afterwards, her ladyship's nephew's widow, Mrs. Oliver, was announced. Mrs. Oliver, who had driven in from Dulwich, was a resolute looking little woman with a thin high-pitched voice, and great fluency of utterance. She was anxious, she said, to visit dear Lady Worral as soon as possible, and had brought her eldest boy and girl with her because she remembered how fond her ladyship used to be of children. Lady Worral did not remember the time herself; she had long been of opinion that "little girls (and boys too) were made to be seen and not heard," and as she was now deprived of the power of seeing them, she had no desire for their noise; however, she took a pinch of snuff, stroked their heads, and desired Hannah to supply them with something to eat. Mrs. Oliver observed that they were "fine *forrard* children," and remarkably quiet. Hannah soon had experience of their forwardness; but their quietness seemed rather apocryphal. By dint of lavishly supplying their plates from the luncheon tray, she was enabled to keep their pretty prattling, always with full mouths, tolerably subordinate to the continuous discourse of their mamma; but when, alas! there was nothing more to be

eaten, Master Johnny and Miss Betsy rewarded her for her kind attention by full and unreserved confidences respecting balls, hoops, and tops; and as their activity gradually rose to a level with their spirits, they commenced races from one sofa to another. It was in vain that Hannah endeavoured to substitute the more inoffensive amusement of looking out of window, and that Mrs. Oliver said with indifference, "My dear loves, do sit down." An audible *aside*, respecting the children's uncommon liveliness only redoubled their noise; and as Mrs. Oliver had announced her intention of spending a long day, Lady Worral at length with unconcealed vexation desired Hannah to take the children a walk in Cavendish Square till dinner. A dialogue on persons and places totally unknown to her was relinquished without much regret; and dragged forward by her companions, Hannah easily found her way to the square. The girl would walk in the dirt; the boy ran away. Notwithstanding these little adventures, dinner time came at last, and after dinner, Mrs. Oliver and family took leave. Lady Worral desired that next time she favoured her with a visit, she would come alone; and then settled herself for her usual nap. Hannah watched the lighting of the lamps, listened to the postman's and muffin boy's bells, and thought of home.

Candles were lighted, the tea equipage brought in; and a newspaper and needlework concluded her first day in London.

The following morning, Hannah accompanied Lady Worral to the oculist, who after examining her ladyship's eyes, appointed the following Monday for the operation. A respite even of three days, was very acceptable, both to the patient and her young friend, who looked forward to the hour of trial with not a little anxiety. It was a warm, sunshiny day, and Lady Worral desired her coachman to drive to the park, willing to give Hannah an opportunity of looking about her, though unable to do so herself. With the glasses let down, she enjoyed the fresh air, and derived as much amusement from the remarks of her companion as in her present state, she was capable of receiving. Their airing was prolonged till late in the afternoon, and on their return, several cards from old acquaintance of Lady Worral's were found on the drawing room table.

"These people will find one out," cried she, with more complacence than anger. "Do read their names, child."

"Mrs. Bates—Mrs. Daubeney—Miss Poynter—Dr. Grey—Sir Lionel Tierney!"

"Sir Lionel Tierney! Is *he* still alive? Well, I am sorry I missed him. Let us hope he will call again."

Lady Worral's evening was spent in reminiscences which the names of her old friends had awakened. She had something odd or entertaining to tell of each. Sir Lionel Tierney and Mrs. Daubeney were evidently her prime favourites, and Hannah's imagination was so far wrought upon by her ladyship's eulogiums, that she became rather curious to see these finished specimens of old school grace and high breeding. The following day brought her gratification, and likewise disappointment. Among several other callers, these favoured acquaintance looked in again, and were welcomed with voluble delight. Totally engrossed with each other, and fluently talking of past times, they had no attention to waste on Hannah, who, as soon as she had recovered from the rustling of silks and rapping of snuff-boxes, perceived, to her mortification, that Mrs. Daubeney was a paralytic woman of seventy, dressed in very shabby black, with an upper lip that hinted of snuff, and a choice of sentences the reverse of grammatical. On the other hand, Sir Lionel was a thin little old man with powder and a queue, a very long sharp nose, and a difficulty of articulation occasioned by the loss of several teeth. Hannah was disappointed, but soon remembered that she ought to have expected the companions of Lady Worral's youth to be as old as herself, and less remarkably exempt from the infirmities of age. As

to their good qualities, she was candid enough to allow that these might be compatible even with snuff and a queue.

"If you were in my place, Rosina," the letter began which she wrote in the evening, "how dramatic an account you would send us of all the odd people we have seen to-day! But alas! I have no talent for description; I cannot give samples of conversation like a Harriet Byron, and I am even checked from minutely describing odd faces and dresses by the fear of being ill-natured. The small specimen I have had of London society has not equalled my expectations. Almost every one I have yet seen has been old, and odd or disagreeable. I must make one exception, however, in favour of a Mrs. Lavenu—an Englishwoman, the widow of a Frenchman, and who was for many years the governess of Princess Razumoffsky. Lady Worral tells me she is very accomplished, and I can easily believe it. Her language is remarkably elegant, her voice very pleasing, and there is something indescribably kind in her manner. Perhaps I am the more inclined to think so, because she this morning bestowed much attention on *me*. However this may be, I hope we shall see her frequently; and I rather think we shall, as she lives in the next street."

Hannah's pen, employed in the praises of her new friend, was running much more quickly than usual, when she was agreeably interrupted by the entrance of Matthew. He came provided with a long story for Lady Worral; and as Hannah wished to finish her letter, she presently resumed her occupation, though grievously interrupted by occasional snatches of "concussion of the brain," "compound fracture," "all the faculty at fault," "unheard of recovery," &c. Observing her, at length, with absent looks, playing with a dry pen, Matthew started up saying, "Let me finish your letter for you, my dear," which he accordingly did, to the following purport.—

"Hannah, you see, my dear mother and Rosy, has fallen among a sad set of old humdrums, whom she takes for a sample of good London society. However, as her case cannot, unluckily, be altered at present, it is well for her that she is so ignorant and contented. I think her looking much better than at Christmas, and it certainly is the prettiest thing in the world to see her care of our old blind friend. I often think, if H— were to see her now, he would be more anxious to paint her picture than ever. There is certainly more mind in her countenance than there used to be. H— enlarged her ideas, and increased her powers both of thinking and feeling; notwith-

standing which, I cannot approve of that detestable bonnet of hers. It has a kind of—it wants a sort of—in short it is not what a bonnet ought to be at all!"

Matthew took care to fold and seal the letter himself.

The following morning, being Sunday, he was able to accompany his sister and Lady Worral to church; and, on their return, they found Mrs. Oliver already in the drawing-room. Having left her children at home, she was pressed to spend another "long day"; and as the invitation was accepted, Hannah, whose place as companion was temporarily supplied, acceded to Matthew's proposal that they should call on their kinswoman, Mrs. Dawes. "If she asks us to dine," said he, "we may as well do so, and then we can go to the Foundling in the evening."

Lady Worral, therefore, agreed not to wait for them, and the brother and sister set off.

"I was rather surprised, Matthew," said Hannah, "to hear you propose dining with a family of whom you seem so little fond."

"To tell you the truth," replied he, "I have refused so many of Mrs. Dawes's invitations that I am on the brink of losing her good graces altogether, and it will be more endurable when you have to share the penance with me."

"I am much obliged to you! Pray, in what does Mrs. Dawes's excessive disagreeability consist?"

"Oh, in a total want of every thing that one likes—a want of mind, a want of manner, a want of sense, a want of breeding, a want of feeling, a want of knowing her own wants, and a way of fancying she wants every thing that she really does not want. For instance, she is always telling her husband that she wants a country-house, a carriage, a footman, and twenty other things which she thinks would make her genteel. Her daughter Charlotte has just tact enough to see her mother's real wants, but then she has a terrible want of her own,—a want of temper."

"That is a bad want indeed."

"Yes; I wish you could hear her, 'La! ma, how can you be so ridiculous?'—That is not half broad enough—'Law, maw!'—it is no caricature, I assure you."

With an introduction to such relatives in anticipation, Hannah was rather sorry to find herself in Grenville Street, and to hear Matthew exclaim, "There's Mrs. Dawes at the window!" Hannah caught a glimpse of an immoderately fat, overdressed woman, looking over the blinds of a narrow window, as her brother knocked at the door; and

before he had quite relinquished the knocker, a smart ring of the parlour bell was followed by an asthmatic call of—

" Mary, there's a double knock. Shew *the company* up stairs, and tell cook not to put on the sauce till—stay, I will come down to see about it myself—" succeeded by

" La! ma, how can you be so ridiculous?"

Matthew *looked*, and Hannah smiled in spite of herself; however, she had time to compose her features, before they opened the door. A very narrow passage led to a still narrower staircase, at the summit of which, from an apology for a landing place, opened the drawing-room door. Although accustomed to a cottage, Hannah could scarcely help wondering how so very large a lady as Mrs. Dawes could perambulate so very small a house. On a sofa, as if earnestly engaged with a book, though her voice had so lately been heard in the parlour, sat Miss Charlotte Dawes, who started and recovered herself very prettily on hearing "Miss Wellford" announced. Matthew, in fact, had escaped Mrs. Dawes's observation as he ran up the steps.

" La! Matthew, is it you?" said she with surprise, as he advanced and introduced his sister. Miss Dawes was willing to be very friendly, very condescending, and rather grand to her new cou-

sin; but the elegance of the scene was sadly deranged by the entrance of Mrs. Dawes.

"So *you* are the gentleman that came with such a smart rat-tat-tat, are you?" said she, wheezing, as she entered from her visit to the kitchen. "Well, the oftener you come, the better, that's all I have to say to you."

She welcomed Hannah with a hearty kiss, and asked what brought her to town.

"A *lady* Worral indeed! How grand we are," cried she laughing.

"La! mamma," muttered Charlotte, "*how* can you be so ridiculous?"

"And pray, has my lady any sons?"

"None, ma'am."

"That's a pity, a'n't it? However, I dare say you're glad enough to come to town, at any rate, with such a chaperon, who will introduce you to the best company. Have you been to any balls or routs yet?"

"Oh no, ma'am. Unfortunately Lady Worral is blind."

"Dear me! how shocking. But now, I tell you what. You don't come here to pay me a morning visit. It shan't be. You shall stay here, both of you, and take pot luck with us."

"La! mamma," sighed Charlotte, "how *can* you—?"

"We'll send word somehow to my lady," continued Mrs. Dawes—"that is, if Mary can be made to understand the way. She is the most stupid creature at finding her way about that can be, and no wonder, for we only had her up from the country about three weeks ago. Town servants are so bad, and so dear! This girl now, we only give—"

"Mamma, one need not tell every one how much or how little one gives," interposed Charlotte.

"Be quiet, Charlotte," said her mother. "I was going to say, we only give this girl ten pounds a year, and yet, I'll be bound to say, before six months are up, when we've had all the trouble of teaching her, she'll be so corrupted by other servants that she'll give warning unless I raise her wages! But with regard to her finding her way —if Mr. Dawes would but be ruled by me, we should have a man to wait at table and go of errands, for nobody *can* keep up an appearance without a footman; and there's Mrs. Gold, at next door—"

"La! ma, how *can*—"

"Keeps a man," continued Mrs. Dawes, "who does the work of three maids, and drinks scarcely any beer, and never stays long when he is sent of errands, and is a credit and a blessing to the family. And its very awkward when one has a

daughter and no sons, for that daughter to have no footman to fetch her home of an evening, a short distance, when she has been taking tea with a friend. There's Charlotte, now—"

"La! ma, how—"

"Was out the other night in Southampton Row, and I'd told her I would not have any money spent in coach hire, such a little distance; and Mary had a cold, so Mr. Dawes, after coming home late from business, was obliged to put his great coat and gaiters on again, and trudge out after missy, at half past eleven o'clock. So, as luck would have it, he stepped in to a friend by the way, just to spend five minutes, and the five minutes went on to an hour; and Miss Charlotte runs home by herself."

"La! Mamma, how *can* you be so ridiculous!"

A double knock here announced the return of Mr. Dawes from a morning call; and his appearance in the drawing room was soon followed by a summons to the dining table. Hannah thought he appeared the most agreeable member of the family. It is true he was one of those plain elderly men who seem expressly intended to check accounts, read newspapers and drink port wine; yet he might pass muster with dozens of others who are good husbands, good masters, and good men of business. The afternoon was intolerably heavy.

Mr. Dawes talked politics, Mrs. Dawes watched the people returning from church, Charlotte yawned, and Matthew, though he hated nuts, ate more than were good for him from pure ennui. The sharp, shrill Foundling bell was hailed by Hannah with secret joy; and Charlotte, who had resolved to attend evening service, started up to dress with alacrity. On their return to a late tea, every one had something to speak of with animation; the sermon, the children, the music, the cold without and the heat within. On parting, Mr. and Mrs. Dawes cordially expressed a hope to see Hannah as often as her engagements would permit; a civility for which she thanked them, though she had little inclination to profit by it.

CHAPTER III.

SIGHT SEEING.

MONDAY brought with it the dreaded oculist. To Hannah's great relief, Mrs. Lavenu came to give the consolation of her presence and assistance. The operation itself gave little pain, and was soon over,—the greatest trial Lady Worral found to be was her subsequent confinement to a darkened chamber. Being of a very irritable temperament, the couching was succeeded by a great deal of fever; she was forbidden to move,—to talk,—or even to sneeze. Mrs. Lavenu proved a most valuable auxiliary in the sick room, where she daily spent several hours; and Mrs. Oliver came once or twice to spend long days, and awfully long they indeed were felt to be! Notwithstanding the assistance thus afforded, the chief fatigue and monotony of the task necessarily fell on Hannah, who more anxious to accelerate Lady Worral's recovery by strict attention to orders, than to afford her present and dangerous amusement, passed

whole hours at her bedside in nearly unbroken silence. Mrs. Lavenu, indeed, sometimes held a whispered dialogue with her, but the old lady, fretful at the irksomeness of her confinement, bid them "For heaven's sake, speak out or else be quiet, for that humming, and buzzing, made her fancy herself in the neighbourhood of a bee hive." Debarred, therefore, from this recreation, it was fortunate for Hannah that like the gentle Lady in Comus, she was not

> "so to seek,
> Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
> And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
> As that the simple want of light and noise
> Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
> And put them into misbecoming plight."

"I am come to banish you, my dear, from this room for the rest of the afternoon and evening," said Mrs. Lavenu softly to Hannah, about a week after her duties as nurse had commenced. "Your brother is waiting for you down stairs, and I have given him positive orders to take you a long walk, and entertain you as much as possible till bed-time. Not a word, I beg! Sally and I shall manage admirably, and you positively need a little fresh air and change of scene." Mrs. Lavenu was not one to dread being taken at her word; Hannah felt that her kind proposal was made in

earnest, and accepted it with a grateful smile. The bright sunlight which met her dazzled sight as she quitted the darkened anti-room, assured her that it was indeed a lovely day, sent as a harbinger of spring; and she could not help stopping to inhale the fragrance of some mignionette at the open window before she went down stairs.

"Hannah! what say you to a row on the Thames?" cried Matthew, jumping up from the sofa as she came in, "I am my own master this afternoon, and it will be an excellent occasion for going to call on cousin Patty. Shall you be afraid?"

"I hardly know—"

"Oh, you will not take cold. What little wind there is, comes from the west; it is quite a spring day. Ladies are bringing out their muslin gowns and silk bonnets. There goes a parasol! What a primrose tells us in the country, you know, a parasol tells us in London."

"I am thinking, not of the weather, but of the dependence to be placed on you as a boatman. My only experience of a water party, was at the Pleasance."

"True, that was an unfortunate affair; but if I remember right, it was owing to Rosina's stupidity in jumping up when she ought to have sat still; besides, the accident could never have happened if they had not put up a sail. Now I pro-

mise you that I will only row. Come, my dear, don't look so suspicious, but run off and put on your bonnet. Your old princess Razumoffsky has promised to take care of Lady Worral."

Hannah obeyed, and they soon were on their way to the stairs where Matthew proposed they should embark. At the corner of a street they met an acquaintance. "Nicholson, will you come with us?" said Matthew. "I'm going to row my sister to Chelsea."

Mr. Nicholson, a quiet looking young man, had friends at Battersea, and had no objection to take an oar. Hannah trembled a little as they pushed off, but soon became tolerably at ease. In the course of the voyage, it became evident that the colloquial talents of Mr. Nicholson were not of a very high order. "There is Lambeth Palace, Hannah," said Matthew, "where Catherine Talbot and her mother used to live with Archbishop Secker. Now we come to Vauxhall, which you read of in Miss Burney's novels; formerly it used to boast high company and low prices; now it has low company and high prices." "Here is a riddle for you, Hannah," resumed he, after a short silence; "what two seas does the Thames flow between?"

Mr. Nicholson objected to this, that it "was too old."

"I will ask you a new one then, Nicholson," said Matthew, "why would a man rather be deaf and dumb, than blind?"

"Has it an answer?"

"Oh yes, a real answer."

"Why would a man rather be deaf and dumb, than blind? — Upon my word, I can't imagine."

"Oh, I shall not tell you yet."

"Hum. Why should a man—would it apply as well to a woman?"

"Quite as well," said Matthew, laughing.

"For the life of me, now, I can't guess it. Come, Wellford, don't excruciate me; I give it up."

"Pshaw! how soon you tire of guessing! Because it's better to have *eyes than no eyes (no-ise.)*"

Mr. Nicholson laughed, and said it was "very good."

"I'll tell you another," said Matthew. "What did Queen Elizabeth do, when she boxed the Earl of Essex's ear?"

"Well now, really—Do *you* know, Miss Wellford?"

"No indeed."

"I see I must tell you, Nicholson. She disgraced her-sex (Essex.)"

Mr. Nicholson looked very grave; and when the pun dawned upon him, he observed that it was "very bad."

A dispute on the merits of these two riddles lasted till they reached Chelsea, when Mr. Nicholson bowed, smiled, and took leave; and Matthew, laughing as he drew Hannah's arm within his own, asked her whether she had ever met with such a simpleton? "But I assure you," added he, qualifyingly, "that he is one of the best natured fellows in the world."

Miss Patty Wilkins, a formal but very worthy maiden lady, inhabited a small house by the water side. There was much affection, warmth, and simplicity in her reception of her young cousins. Her little tea table was placed at the window; a Canary bird was singing merrily and strongly; a Lady's Magazine with a pair of spectacles between the leaves, and a very smart netting apparatus, shared the window seat with several flowers. Miss Wilkins was delighted to question Hannah concerning her mother, and to describe the pleasant hours she had formerly spent with "cousin Kate." She loved to recall the pomp and circumstance of Park Place; and could not be quite convinced that the cares and pleasures of matronage had atoned to "poor Kate" for the loss of grandeur; nor, that with "such trials" she should

now in the tenth year of her widowhood, possess good health and spirits.

There was a rowing match on the river, which made Chelsea very gay; and the tall old trees were beginning to shew symptoms of foliage. It was a happy afternoon to Hannah and Matthew, and they imparted as much pleasure as they received. They walked home, and reached Welbeck Street just as Mrs. Lavenu, leaving Sally with her mistress, had come down to drink her late tea.

Insensibility to kindness was not one of Lady Worral's faults. She was quite aware that Hannah's situation must lately have been one both of irksomeness and anxiety; and as soon as she became able to dispense with her attendance, she racked her mind to devise means of repaying the obligation she had incurred. Lady Worral made few speeches, and those few were blunt: she never told Hannah that she was grateful for her watchful attention; but she said to Mrs. Lavenu, "That girl is a treasure! I don't know what I should have done without her, nor what I can do for her." Mrs. Lavenu observed that young people were generally fond of a little gaiety; and on this hint, Lady Worral commissioned Matthew to shew his sister such exhibitions as happened to be open. Matthew would not let her ladyship frank their

admission, though he was grateful for the liberty now granted to Hannah, and the access to her which was allowed him at all hours. After accompanying her to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, he took her to the British Museum.

Hannah had read three or four volumes on mineralogy and conchology; and the extensive collection of natural curiosities which she now beheld, afforded her a real treat; insomuch that Matthew, before her curiosity was half satisfied, became heartily tired; and carried her off to the Townley Marbles. Hannah started back on seeing the easels of several artists; it was possible, she thought, that Huntley might be among the students who were copying from the antique. She scarcely dared to raise her eyes; and did not hear one word in ten of what Matthew was good-naturedly explaining to her. "Let us go on; we shall be very late," said she in a low voice, trying to lead him forward. "There is plenty of time, my dear; we have not half examined this room yet," returned Matthew. Looking at her as he spoke, however, he observed that she was flushed and uneasy; and immediately complied with her wish, though the source of her disturbance never occurred to him.

The next time that Matthew had a morning to spare, he took his sister to the British Institution.

They were so unfashionably early, that the rooms were nearly empty, a few quiet looking parties and queer faced connoisseurs forming the whole company. Matthew was glad of it for his sister's sake, as it gave her an opportunity of examining the exhibition undisturbed by the flutter and heat of a fashionable crowd. Hannah's ideas of art were principally drawn from Huntley's paintings and Rosina's sketches; but these were no bad models on which to have formed her taste, and her artist-lover had often given her lectures on the principles of colouring and grouping in their walks, and drawn her attention to broken masses, happy effects, and picturesque costumes. Matthew was rather surprised, on commenting on the brilliant tints of a painting, to hear her quietly remark—

"Yes, they are produced by glazing."

"How came you to be so knowing?" said he, laughing.

"You forget," said Hannah with a sigh, "that I have watched the progress of a picture."

Matthew was sorry for his question, and moved off to something else. "Well!" exclaimed he abruptly, "this is rather unexpected! Good, too. Look here, Hannah!"

Startled by the oddness of his tone, she was already at his side; and to her extreme surprise,

beheld a fancy portrait which it was impossible to mistake for any but that of Rosina. It was from one of the numerous studies which Huntley had made before he could catch her likeness to his mind, and represented a cottage girl leaning through a casement window clustered with flowers, her lips slightly severed, and her hand half raised, as if listening to some pleasant and beloved voice, or the song of birds. The execution was so different from that of the Ruth and Naomi, that had not the likeness betrayed him, Hannah would never have detected Huntley's hand; for it was painted in the most rough, unfinished, and careless manner: the pencil seemed recklessly to have dashed the colours on the canvas, and yet every touch had its effect.

"Every feature is Rosina's!" cried Matthew, in an under tone of admiration, "and more especially, it has Rosy's *look!* I can almost expect her to turn round on me with some saucy answer. Cannot you fancy she hears Lewis Pennington coming up the lane? I saw her look just so, one evening, when Lewis and I came in from a walk: she was gathering jassamine, and turned round, saying "Oh, Mr. Pennington, is it you?"—yet I am sure she heard him coming. Huntley was by, and must have caught her likeness at that moment."

Here, two amateurs contrived to edge themselves between Matthew and the painting.

"Good effect here," said one, "excellent chiaro-scuro — I should know that style, and yet—"

"Huntley's," said the other, without referring to his catalogue. Hannah involuntarily started.

"Bless me! it is, indeed! You must certainly be right; but how his style has altered! Plenty of white wax and spirit of wine here. Look at these lumps of paint. One would think they were laid on with a trowel."

"Very spirited handling," observed his companion, "but rather too sketchy. I don't like to see our young artists grow slovens. Let me see—surely that shoulder is out of drawing."

"No, quite correct—the reflected light, you see, mingles with the—"

"Pshaw! the reflected light, as you call it, is the crimson shoulder-strap of the boddice."

"Is it?—no,—and yet—'tis so, I declare. Mr. Huntley's anatomy is generally very correct. I suppose his model was crooked."

And with a laugh, they passed on. "Too bad," muttered Matthew, angrily.—"Huntley had no right to set up Rosy's modest, artless beauty for people to sneer and cavil at. I shall tell him so, if—"

" Are there any more of his pictures here ?" said Hannah, faultering.

" Let me see—F,—G,—H, Huntley; numbers 20, 75, 137. This is twenty; seventy-five must be on the east side—here it is; ' Study of an old woman by candlelight.' Dame Stokes, by all that's wrinkled !"

" Let us look for the other, Matthew."

" A hundred and twenty-seven. —' The shipwrecked mariner.'—Come this way, Hannah. I have found it.—Huntley himself !"

Yes; a single glance sufficed to shew Hannah that he was right. The wilful, eccentric young man had chosen to represent himself standing with folded arms on a barren fragment of rock, surrounded by a dreary sea and sky, and looking up complainingly, at the lowering heavens.

" Let us go, Hannah," said Matthew, gently.

" No, Matthew,—a little longer.—Let us stay," said she, with eyes filling with tears. Have *I* thus shipwrecked his hopes and clouded his prospects ? she asked herself. Or does the world appear to him such a gloomy, trackless waste as he has represented it ? Oh that the rock to which he clung, were indeed the Rock of Ages !

Lost in thought, she remained standing before the picture, not even hearing the discussion of the two amateurs, who were a second time in her

neighbourhood, examining a groupe of Mulready's. Matthew stood by her, uncertain whether to interrupt her or not; but in another moment, exclaimed with a relieved air,

"Oh, Nicholson! are you here? How do you do?"

Hannah was never less inclined to give any one a friendly reception; however, Mr. Nicholson, without detecting any coolness in her curtsey, fixed himself on them, not only during the remainder of their stay, but on their walk home; even to the very door.

"Egregiously stupid fellow!" cried Matthew, running up stairs, "I was obliged to say 'Good by' with marked emphasis, to prevent his following me in!"

Hannah had betrayed some interest in an account of a new play which one of Lady Worral's visitors had given one morning; and Mrs. Lavenu, who was present, had determined that as soon as a young niece whom she was expecting from the country, should arrive, she would make a party for the girls, to the theatre. Her niece had now come to town, and Hannah, on returning from the British Gallery, found Mrs. Lavenu in the drawing-room, and was made acquainted with the plan. Of course she was much pleased, and very grateful.

"On Thursday night, then," said Mrs. Lavenu. "Mary is very anxious to see, or rather hear Der Freyschutz, and I suppose you will be glad to judge of it, yourself. Even I, old woman as I am, have a little curiosity to see what every one is talking about. One important point remains to be discussed. Our escorts! My nephews are unfortunately out of town, and I have only an old bachelor cousin to rely upon. You, Mr. Wellford, I suppose we may make sure of. Can we find any one else?"

"I know of one, if he would do," said Matthew. "Nicholson, Hannah?—Mr. Charles Nicholson of Finsbury Square, ma'am, a friend of mine, not overburthened with sense to be sure, but a quiet, worthy fellow, with very good (city) connexions."

"He will do very well," said Mrs. Lavenu, "I know something of the Nicholsons of Finsbury Square. So bring him to us by all means, my dear Mr. Wellford; and now good morning."

"Hannah," said Matthew as soon as Mrs. Lavenu was gone, "I am sorry you are to see Der Freyschutz.

"Why?"

"It would be better for your first ideas of the theatre to be connected with some good piece. Some tragedy of Shakspeare's or comedy of Sheridan's. You will be so puzzled and bewildered

by the eccentricities of this German melo-drama, that you will either imbibe false ideas of good acting or be tired to death."

"Oh, I hope not. Mrs. Lavenu was so very kind to think of taking me at all, that we must not complain of her choice of a play. Only think of her taking notice, a fortnight,—nearly three weeks ago, of my saying I should like to go to the theatre, and remembering it now!"

"Very goodnatured and considerate indeed. Only, you see, this is a musical piece; and as you are not fond of music—"

"Why should you think me not fond of music?" said Hannah, rather hurt at the supposition. "I cannot play, and perhaps I may not have an ear, but indeed, Matthew, I am very fond of music."

"You surprise me! I thought you did not use to care for singing."

"That was before I knew what good singing was," said Hannah; thinking of duetts sung at close of eve by Rosina and Huntley.

"Well, in that case, I can only say you will have a great treat," said Matthew, taking up his hat. When he had left her, Hannah remained with her eyes fixed on the open catalogue which lay before her.—"No. 20, Cottage girl. Arthur Huntley." How much these simple words re-

called! She was aroused by a loud double knock, and had just time to escape to her own room before Mrs. Daubeny was shewn up stairs. As there was no fear that her presence would now be required below, she sat down to proceed with a letter which lay unfinished in her writing desk; but soon found that, though endeavouring to write cheerfully, she could not help giving an air of dejection to her communications.

"Lady Worral," she wrote, "is now able to sit in a room shaded only with common Venetian blinds, and to receive morning visitors. She cannot yet bear strong candlelight; but she has nevertheless accepted invitations to one or two quiet whist parties in the ensuing week, and has taken her first airing to-day with Mrs. Lavenu. Thus, you see, I have gaiety in store; yet I cannot help longing for the time when we shall return home. Matthew took me this morning to see a beautiful exhibition of modern paintings in Pall Mall. I was rather curious to find out whether there were any there which I should recognize at first sight; and I was not disappointed. One of *your* numerous likenesses, Rosina—"

Here, strange to say, Hannah's tears began to drop upon her paper; and, after yielding for a few minutes to her low spirits, she thought it best to erase the broken sentence very neatly, and go on

to relate Mrs. Lavenu's kindness with respect to the play.

Thursday arrived without any thing to disturb the arrangement for the evening. Mrs. Daubeny came to play picquet with Lady Worral; and Matthew brought his friend Nicholson at the very moment which had been appointed. The carriage was already at the door, so Mr. Nicholson had nothing more to do than to bow to Lady Worral and hand Hannah down stairs. Matthew followed, gave the word of command, "to Mrs. Lavenu's," drew up the glass with an air of importance, and produced a play bill; upon which, when he had read it aloud for his sister's edification, Mr. Nicholson observed, that it was "a strong cast."

"There's nothing I like better," cried he, with more alertness than usual, "than going to the play with a nice party."

"Any where, for me," said Matthew, "with a nice party.—Let it rain, snow, hail, thunder or lighten, no matter, when people are really well sorted: the more inconveniences the better, provided there are no grumblers. For my part, I make it a rule never to grumble; for however bad things may be already that is sure to make them worse."

Here the carriage drew up for Mrs. Lavenu and

her niece, who were dressed and ready. Miss Fisher, a cheerful girl of seventeen, was in wild spirits, and resolved to make every one as lively as herself. The old bachelor cousin, whom Mrs. Lavenu had promised to enlist, had sent an excuse, and every one was very well content to abide the loss. Matthew amused Mrs. Lavenu, and rattled to Miss Fisher's heart's content; and Hannah was rather rejoiced that Mr. Nicholson's want of words would give her ample opportunity of attending to the play. As they alighted at the box entrance, Matthew offered Mrs. Lavenu his arm; and Mr. Nicholson, placing himself between Hannah and Miss Fisher, observed with a gentle laugh, "As three can't walk two-and-two, I shall be happy to divide you."

"Keep close, Nicholson," said Matthew, looking back, "I would not lose Hannah's first look for the world. Come," said he, as he handed her into the front row, "you look dazzled enough to content any one. Is a theatre like what you expected?"

"How glad I am we are in time for the overture!" exclaimed Miss Fisher. "You have never heard it, have you, Miss Wellford? You will be delighted!"

Poor Hannah's promise of delight, however, like too many others, was destined to be blighted.

Having arrived unfashionably early, our party had leisure to examine the groups gradually filling the boxes, and to recognize sundry acquaintances. Matthew's intimates, indeed, were solely to be found in the pit; and once he turned towards his sister with a look of intelligence; but seeing her engaged in listening to Mrs. Lavenu, he forbore to interrupt her; and the fancy for speaking to her passed off. The overture commenced, and every one's soul now became absorbed in Weber's wild and eccentric composition.

"You know that air, Hannah?" said Matthew, leaning towards her.

She did not hear him at first; and when she looked round, she said anxiously in a low voice, "Matthew, who is that immediately before us in the pit?"

"There are so many! How can I tell which you mean? Oh,—now—Yes, he sees us," said Matthew, reluctantly bowing.

Hannah was right; it was Huntley. Their eyes met, and she felt her cheeks painfully burning. The fever flush of a moment was succeeded by sickness of heart. He continued looking earnestly at her for some time, and then turned away and began to speak to some one who sat beside him. As soon as Hannah found she was no longer an object of attention, she could not resist watching

him. His face was now averted; but when it was again turned, though not to look at her, it was gay with smiles. Hannah could not smile. The curtain now drew up, and the play commenced. She certainly endeavoured to attend to it, but her newness to scenic representation, the wildness of the story, the unearthly character of the music, and the consciousness of Huntley's presence, combined to bewilder her so completely, that she could afterwards give but a vague account of what she had heard and seen. Whenever the song or dialogue immediately in hand ceased to command her attention, her eyes unconsciously reverted to Huntley. He never looked at her after their first recognition, yet she could see by his attitudes, his frequent smile, his discussions with his companion, that his mind was at ease. "Better that it should be so," thought she, with filling eyes. She turned away, and endeavoured to fix her attention on the stage, but wondered why people laughed and applauded. At the close of the piece, her praises were given so coldly that Miss Fisher was convinced she could have no soul for music. Yet it had had an effect on her, but when the excitement was past, it only left her more melancholy.

At night, when she found herself alone in her room, with no occasion any longer to feign gaiety or admiration she did not feel, she rested her head

on her arms and gave way to tears. "Yet why do I weep?" she asked herself. "What do I regret, or what do I expect? That Huntley should love me still, against all hope, or that his character should have changed? When I could not depend on that change, even with every incentive to promote it, could I expect it when he anticipated no reward for the struggle? I have been very weak; I hardly know what foolish dream of amendment and reconciliation has been clinging to me in spite of myself, nor what I expected from our seeing each other again. We *have* seen each other, and no more will result from it than I ought to have foreseen."

With this sorrowful reflection, Hannah went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD CONNECTIONS, NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

As even the wisest and best of us are apt to nourish foolish hopes and wishes, it is not improbable that Huntley's image had, up to this time, occupied more room in Hannah's thoughts than she chose to acknowledge, even to herself. Now however, though in fact, nothing more had passed between them,—nor according to the customs of society, *could* have passed between two rational beings, one of whom was in the pit and the other in the dress circle, whatever change of feeling might have taken place,—yet Hannah felt, perhaps first convinced at heart, that they would henceforth always be strangers to each other. Huntley now knew she was in town; he might, if inclined, find out where she was from Matthew; he did not come; it was evident, therefore, that he did not wish to come; and had no intention of hazarding the mortification of a second refusal. When two or three days had completely satisfied Hannah of the fact, she really became soberly

convinced that things were better as they were. Her longing to return to Summerfield now grew more intense; but Lady Worral had many engagements of business and pleasure to fulfil before she left town, and resolved to stay out her second month. Nearly six weeks had already elapsed, and the expiration of that term would bring them to the middle of May, the month in which, if the country is seen to most advantage, London is seen to most advantage too.

Hannah could only be resigned; for her curiosity for sight-seeing was already satisfied, and a few meetings of the same elderly people to play cards alternately at Mrs. Daubeny's, Mrs. Lavenu's, and Miss Poynter's, had not many attractions either for a lively or a rational mind. At Mrs. Lavenu's, indeed, Hannah was agreeably surprised to find a mixed party, and to observe that only a few whist tables were made up, while the generality of the guests had recourse to music and conversation. It was when she had just been left by Miss Fisher, that Hannah saw Mrs. Lavenu approach her, accompanied by a fashionable and graceful young woman apparently of six or seven and twenty, towards whom Hannah's eyes had often been directed in the course of the evening.

"My dear Miss Wellford," said Mrs. Lavenu,

" allow me to introduce two cousins to each other who ought to be well acquainted. This lady, who is ambitious of your friendship, is Mrs. Ponsonby."

Hannah's face beamed with smiles as she rose to take the offered hand of Lewis Pennington's eldest sister. Mrs. Ponsonby sat down beside her, and inquired after her family, whom she said Lewis had almost made her feel acquainted with. He had spent a fortnight with her before he left England, and had often spoken with delight of his visit to Summerfield. At present he was in Rome, and appeared in no hurry to leave a place so full of interest to a classical scholar and enthusiast. He had sent Marianne a most entertaining account of the holy week; and a shocking story of an English family who had been carried off by the brigands. Mrs. Ponsonby was expecting her sisters Isabella and Sophy to join her soon in Portland Place. She had tried hard to persuade Marianne to come to her, but Marianne was so excessively domestic that it was impossible to draw her from home. The best creature in the world! the idol of her family and friends; but really *too* domestic; for every thing may be carried to extremes, and a little change of scene is sometimes wanted to rouse one's spirits.

With equal animation and fluency did Mrs.

Ponsonby talk of her children, her husband, her home in Portland Place, the Opera, the Exhibition, Kensington Gardens, Brighton, Ramsgate, Stoke Barton, Charles Kemble, and the last Scotch novel; till a gentlemanly young man who had not long entered the room, approached her with a meaning smile and said—

"I am come to take you away."

"Is it time?" said she, referring to her little French watch, "nearly twelve, I declare. Oh, we shall come in for the quadrille before supper, and I told Mrs. Donoughmore we should only look in on her. You are tearing me away from a most charming gossip with Miss Wellford."

And then turning to Hannah, she introduced Mr. Ponsonby, expressed her regret at being obliged to leave her, pressed her to call on her, shook hands and smiled farewell. Hannah was attracted by her beauty and easy, winning manner, and felt very willing to meet her friendly advances half way. It was flattering for a young and timid stranger,—a female too—to be for one whole hour, the object of sole attention to the most elegant woman in the room. There was a little of the coquette in Mrs. Ponsonby, but it was impossible to deny her being very charming; and—she was the sister of Lewis Pennington.

Hannah soon afterwards called in Portland

Place. Every thing and every one seemed in commotion. A milliner's apprentice with band-boxes stood in the hall; in the boudoir into which Hannah was shewn, Mrs. Ponsonby way trying on caps and turbans before a looking-glass, the two Miss Penningtons, dressed for walking, were rattling over a new duett on a cabinet piano, and Mr. Ponsonby, helping his children, his dogs, and himself, at a luncheon-tray. A lounge in Regent Street was in prospect, and though every one was delighted to see Hannah, she felt herself in the way. The milliner was called in, and Mrs. Ponsonby observed "You see how hideous I look in this; it won't do at all," and shook her beautiful ringlets as she took off the turban and carelessly threw it into the box. Mr. Ponsonby's whip-maker called for directions; a note was brought which Sophy Pennington must answer immediately; Lewis, a spoiled but sweet little boy of six years old, cut his hand in helping himself to some cake, and his mother in running to his assistance, trod on Neptune. The dog barked, the boy screamed, Sophy laughed, Isabella stopped her ears, and Mr. Ponsonby, re-entering the boudoir, swore and rang the bell. The children were consigned to their nurse, but the dog was patted into good humour and allowed to remain; and ere Lewis's screams had died away as he was borne

off to the third floor, Hannah thought it best to conclude her short visit; observing that it was a pity they should lose their walk on so fine a day.

All Hannah's visits, however, were not equally ill-timed. Mrs. Ponsonby soon returned her call, and was accompanied by her little boy, whose silky curls won Lady Worral's admiration. "We think him like my brother," said Mrs. Ponsonby, carelessly; and she then asked Hannah whether she knew that her aunt, Mrs. Parkinson, was in town. "Mr. Parkinson has come up on business of some kind, I believe, and they will only make a short stay. They are in Great Cumberland Street."

"They have never been on good terms with us, you know, since Rosina left Park Place."

"No, so I understand. It is a pity, and more on Mrs. Parkinson's account, at present, than yours, for she leads a very lonely life. I have intended to call on her every day this week, but really have not had time."

When Hannah returned Mrs. Ponsonby's visit, she found a carriage standing at the door, and was mortified at the idea that she should again be on the point of going out. On nearer approach, however, she saw the footman belonging to the chariot chatting with a servant at the house-door, in a different livery, which she recognised as that

of Mrs. Ponsonby's. His mistress was "at home," and Hannah found her alone with an elderly lady, who arose on hearing her announced, as if to take leave. Mrs. Ponsonby scarcely attended to Hannah on her entrance, in her anxiety to prevail on her visitor to remain, to which, after many honeyed persuasions, the lady acceded with rather an ill grace. Mrs. Ponsonby was then at leisure to welcome Hannah with great cordiality and to enter into a conversation which rested almost wholly between themselves; for the elderly lady was coldly and ominously silent. Mrs. Ponsonby seemed eager to draw Hannah out. Now, Hannah was one of those who are never brilliant, and who never attempt to deceive others into the belief of their being so, by *petillante* sprightliness; but she could seldom have been seen to greater advantage than on this present morning. Her easy and somewhat slender figure, of the medium height, was attired in a very well made but perfectly plain silk gown; a beautifully worked collar of her own embroidery fell back from the sweeping outline of her throat, and a modest and becoming bonnet neither shewed too much nor too little of a sweet and gentle face, shaded with light brown curls. Her dress was as completely that of a lady as it was destitute of fineness and extravagance; and there was as much distinction between the cheer-

ful self-possession of her manner, and the flippant volubility of a young lady made-according-to-pattern, as between her simple dress, and the costume for the month then entered upon, in La Belle Assemblée.

Mrs. Ponsonby was unusually minute in her inquiries after every member of Hannah's family. "How delighted you must be to have such frequent opportunities of seeing that nice young man, your brother: I have seldom seen so pleasing a countenance! And then his manner—it quite charmed me, I assure you. There is certainly a strong family resemblance between you; but his spirits seem to be higher than yours—more like what I should fancy, those of your sister. She is very lively, is not she?"

"Yes, Rosina has excellent spirits."

"So she had, I remember, as a child; they quite carried her away. Such a laughing little creature! Literally, one to "make a sunshine in a shady place." And certainly, a perfect beauty *then*, whatever she may be now. Pray, is she still as pretty as ever? Lewis said she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen, but he is apt to deal in hyperboles."

"*We* think her very pretty," said Hannah modestly.

"Is she tall?"

"Not quite so tall as I am.—There is very little difference."

"And dark?"

"Rather; a very clear dark, with a soft, bright colour."

"And she sings, does not she?"

"Yes; I have never heard so sweet a voice."

"She must turn the heads of all Summerfield!"

"There are very few heads there to turn," said Hannah, smiling.

"What a pity she did not accompany you to town! I should have been so delighted to have seen her!"

"We could not both have left my mother; and indeed, Rosina was very well contented to remain."

"She is so much attached to your mother—"

"Very."

"I always thought her, as a child, very affectionate. I used to see her, you know, at my father's. I dare say she has forgotten these old times.

"Oh no! indeed she has not. She often speaks of them."

"I have a very imperfect recollection of your mother. I was only about six years old when she married, yet I either remember or fancy I re-

member a very pretty, high spirited young woman playing hide and seek with me, whom my father and mother used to call Kate Parkinson."

"My mother's spirits are no longer high, though they are even. She has had much to try them; and even before my father's death, I do not remember her having what I should call high spirits."

"No wonder, with such a family," said the elderly lady shortly. Hannah looked surprised at the abrupt remark. Without any reference to the foregoing dialogue, the lady now began to complain of the agonies she had lately suffered, and was still suffering from the ear-ache, which nothing would assuage. Hannah mentioned a simple remedy which her mother had found very successful. The lady looked impersuadable, and said she had tried many *infallible* remedies which had proved no remedies at all. Hannah gently and friendlily stated many cases of cure which had come to her own knowledge. The lady's rigid features relaxed; and ungraciously enough, she begged to have the specific written down for her on a piece of paper. Mrs. Ponsonby supplied a pencil and card with alacrity; and Hannah wrote down the simple prescription, and handed it to the suffering stranger with a smile and curtsey. The curtsey was returned, rather stiffly, as if an

obligation had been conferred rather than received; and with resolution which would no longer be softened, the visitant withdrew, Mrs. Ponsonby following her into the vestibule.

"You will grant—" said she softly, detaining for a moment her visitor's hand.

"Yes, yes," interrupted the other fretfully, "I grant all you wish me to say. She is a pretty, modest, well-behaved girl, dressed very properly for her station—very properly. Good morning."

"Well," said Mrs. Ponsonby laughing as she returned to Hannah and shut the door of her boudoir, "how do you like your aunt?"

"My aunt!" cried Hannah.

"No other than Mrs. Parkinson in propria persona, I assure you. Did you ever know a better model of cold, fretful ungraciousness? However, I am glad that a favourable impression has been made on *one* side, at least; and you will forgive me, I hope, for avoiding the awkwardness of introducing you to each other at first, which would only have produced a *scene* and rather a disagreeable one. Mrs. Parkinson would have flounced down stairs, without bestowing a single look on you, and thinking that I had used her very ill; whereas, by giving her the advantage of seeing and knowing you, herself unknown, I tried the only chance which existed of mollifying her in

your favour. You agree with me, I hope, in thinking that it is better for near relations to be in amity than at variance."

"Undoubtedly; and I am really obliged to you for your kind intention, though I believe your stratagem will be attended with little success. Poor woman! How unlike my mother! But we must remember she was in pain. I hope my remedy will give her relief."

"I hope so too; and now let us go into the drawing room, where Sophy's Italian singing-master is just taking his leave."

CHAPTER V.

A FAMILY DINNER.

WHAT great events from trivial causes spring! Mrs. Parkinson was cured of her ear-ache; and observed to her husband that "it certainly was very thoughtful and attentive of Hannah Wellford to have offered her the prescription, especially as she had not known who she was; remarkably thoughtful, certainly! more so than could be expected from the generality of young people, who usually were so taken up with themselves and each other, as to have no consideration for such things. And indeed, Hannah Wellford appeared a very modest well behaved young person, not at all assuming or flighty, but dressed very properly for her station."

Mr. Parkinson was rather astounded at the news of his wife's having spent half an hour in her niece's company without noticing her otherwise than as a stranger. His character was compounded of indolence and good-nature. He could

think of the Wellfords struggling with poverty at forty miles distance from Stoke Barton with composure, or rather, never think of them at all; but proximity made the case widely different, and the chance of coming into contact with relations with whom he and his wife were on bad terms, made him feel that family quarrels were very bad things.

"I think, my dear," said he, holding a slice of ham suspended on his fork, and looking for a moment as if the assertion that 'he thought' had really some foundation.

"What do you think, Mr. Parkinson?" said she.

"That really, these poor Wellfords have been long enough in disgrace."

"Poor! yes, I fancy they must be poor enough!" said Mrs. Parkinson disdainfully, "pride and poverty usually go together."

"But this poor girl, your namesake, does not seem by your own account, to *be* proud. I think you say she has been brought to town by a Lady Worral. It appears therefore, that persons of consideration take them by the hand, which they would hardly do, if they had not conducted themselves creditably. And your sister Kate certainly used to have a good deal of affection for you. And it speaks well for her, the bringing up respectably

so large a family on such small means. So that really,—considering the advantage that a little countenance on our part might be to them, and the duty of Christian charity—ahem!—and the cure of the ear-ache, and Hannah's being in town, *and all*,—it really, I say, appears to me that we might,—without making any great advances, you know,—Rosina having once been such a favourite of ours, and now most likely grown out of her little childish passions—so that, altogether—what do you think of it?"

Mr. Parkinson's elocution was certainly rather defective, though his drift was clear, and his wife, albeit little versed in the niceties of the English language, took rather unfair advantage of him, by saying ironically, "It! What is the *it* you are talking about? I am sure I can't tell, and I doubt whether you know yourself."

This was so complete a set down, that poor Mr. Parkinson, the most gentle of husbands, had not a word to say for himself; and finishing his breakfast rather abruptly, he walked to the window and wondered whether it would rain or not.

Now it was pure snappishness which made Mrs. Parkinson end the dialogue so unpleasantly, for she really had an inclination to extend the hand of reconciliation to Hannah, and to invite

her to dinner—so perversely will ill-temper, when it has been suffered to acquire the upper hand, make us oppose the very thing we desire. Therefore, after some rumination, when her husband had walked out, she took up a pen and wrote as follows:

Dear Niece,

I suppose you heard who I was, the other day, from Mrs. Ponsonby. I am happy to say your cure for the ear-ache has really done me good, and I don't know when I have been so much at ease. So, if you are disengaged, I shall be glad for you to dine with your uncle and me to-day, in a quiet way, at five o'clock.

Your affectionate aunt,

HANNAH PARKINSON.

Hannah read the note with no small surprise; and communicated its contents to Lady Worral. "Accept the invitation by all means, child," was her advice, "there is no knowing what good may come of it to your family." Hannah therefore wrote a note of acceptance, much amused at the singular way in which the renewed correspondence between the two families had been brought about, and resolved never to be in future "a despiser of small things."

As there was no need to make any alteration in her dress for so quiet an occasion, she accompanied Lady Worral in her afternoon drive, and was set down at her aunt's door on their return homewards. Lady Worral thought it her duty to give her several injunctions respecting her behaviour.

"Remember, Hannah," said she, "that we old folks are often testy and particular, and that your aunt is a very rich as well as very capricious woman, and may be of immense service to your brothers if she chooses, therefore be very careful to please."

Hannah's pride rather rose at the bare hint of fortune-hunting; however, she knew that Lady Worral's advice was perfectly well meant, and received it as such, though she had not the smallest intention of *manœuvring* herself into Mrs. Parkinson's good graces, even for the sake of Matthew and Harry.

On being shewn into the drawing-room, she found her aunt talking to a young man who was lounging in a non-chalant manner, with his arm on the chimney-piece. Hannah had been rather nervous in the anticipation of an awkward meeting; she was therefore relieved by the perfectly *unfeeling* kiss which Mrs. Parkinson bestowed on her, as she said with more graciousness than

usual, though in a tone which had become habitually querulous,

"How d'ye do, my dear? how d'ye do? I am glad to see you. It was you I wanted your mother to let me have from the first. This is Mr. James Parkinson, my nephew, and your second cousin, you know. James, Hannah Wellford, whom I was talking to you about. Not a bit like her mother! She's my namesake, and *I* think, a good deal like me. What do you say?"

"What I say," said Mr. James Parkinson, after a nodding sort of bow, and a full survey of Hannah's face, "is, that I don't see the shadow of a resemblance between you."

"You must be blind then," said Mrs. Parkinson, crossly. "Cummings!" cried she to a missy-looking waiting-maid, who had just brought in her reticule, and had heard both question and answer, "who is that young lady like?"

"Dear me, ma'am!" cried Cummings, scarcely looking at Hannah, "I never saw so strong a likeness to you in my life."

"You hear," said Mrs. Parkinson, complacently, as her maid left the room. Her nephew burst into a fit of laughter, and sweeping down at the same time, a pile of china from the mantel-piece with his arm, stopped short with

"Hey!—that's awkward!"

Mrs. Parkinson was more mistress of herself at the fall of china than might have been anticipated, and stood Pope's test of temper so well that Hannah concluded the author of the mischief was a considerable favourite. He, meanwhile, sauntered to the window, where, after lounging over a chair till a footman had cleared away the fragments, he exclaimed—

"Well!—I must be off."

"Why, James," said his aunt, "I thought you would dine with us."

"Can't," replied he, "I've a million of things to prevent me. First, I must go and blow up that stupid fellow Huffel, who can never make a collar fit as it ought to do, and then I've a place or two to call at in Bond Street, and after that to dress, and dine with Stafford Smyth, at Carlton Chambers."

"But why can't you dine here?" persisted his aunt.

"Because I've ordered *côtelettes à la Maintenon* for Staff and me, *I tell you*, and afterwards we're going to Drury Lane."

"Oh, if you are engaged, I can't help it," said Mrs. Parkinson, with resignation; for a surly temper is often held in control by another more surly than itself. Mr. James Parkinson accordingly took up his hat and departed.

"A nice young man!" observed his aunt, as the door closed after him.

Hannah could not cordially echo the eulogium, for he had seemed to her at once bold, rude, and self-conceited. As to his person, it was rather vulgarly good-looking; a tall, heavy figure, florid colour, flat face, prominent eyes, and sandy hair.

"A very fine young man," pursued his aunt, "and very much admired. Park Place will be his, some time or other, you know. If Rosina, now, had but stayed with us, he would have been a nice match for her by this time; and what a fine thing that would have been for you all! I might have made it worth his while to have proposed for her. *All that* has been prevented by her wilfulness. A very wilful girl she was indeed, and I may say has been the ruin of your family. So, she's very pretty, is she?"

Minute inquiries succeeded into the most trivial details of sister Kate's *ménage;* whether she kept a cow; how many pigs, what poultry, what servants; whether she sent her eggs to market, and sold her garden-stuff; the price of coals and butcher's meat, the rent and taxes of her cottage; what Matthew was allowed for his maintenance, and what the girls for their clothes. "Was the washing put out?—What! *all* done by one maid? —How much did they give a char-woman? How

often did they wash?—She supposed Kate was not above plaiting and getting up a few of the fine things herself. A mistress's eye (scornfully) was worth two pair of hands. And did they *really* visit on equal terms in the neighbourhood? And keep up a genteel appearance? Certainly, economy and management were fine things. There were two Miss Bettses, maiden sisters, who used to live at Stoke Barton, on eighty pounds a year—*of course* they did not visit, but they were always nicely dressed; so very nicely that every body used to wonder where the money came from; till at last some one caught them one day dining on hard dumplings. Kate used to be very wasteful of her pocket-money as a girl—always buying books and prints, and giving away. Aunt Diana used sometimes to be quite scandalized at it, for it gave *her* the air of being the heiress. Experience must have taught her some hard lessons. Did Mr. Good take much for Matthew's apprentice fee?—Was Harry articled?"

All this, Hannah bore with much more equanimity than Rosina could have done. Then came more trying questions. "Had Mrs. Wellford received any offers of marriage since the death of her husband? Were there any young men in Summerfield? Had Hannah or Rosina any beaus?" It was a relief to lead her off to Lady Worral,

her connexions, her fortune, her establishment, her age, and her *intentions*. Mrs. Parkinson was persuaded Hannah must be looking forward to a legacy; but Hannah assured her that she believed Lady Worral had next to nothing to leave. This placed Hannah's conduct in a very extraordinary light; but then it was a fine thing to have a friend to speak of as "her ladyship," and to come to London. Besides, those old dowagers who live on their jointures, have often a good many old-fashioned jewels, and trinkets; and make very handsome presents sometimes.

And now, Mrs. Parkinson placed her chair at the window, and wondered what kept Mr. Parkinson out so long. Hannah asked her if she were fond of London.

"Can't bear it," replied she, peevishly, "my head is in a constant whirl. I have not slept well a single night since I left Stoke Barton; and now we are kept in town because that tiresome man in Long Acre has not finished our travelling carriage. I send Mr. Parkinson to hurry him every day, but I might just as well send nobody, for he's of that easy, indolent temper, that the tradespeople make him believe just what they like. Oh, here he comes at last! dawdling up the street as if it were an hour to dinner time. What has the man been doing to his hat? It is all over white-

wash. I dare say, now, he would rather, at any time, walk under a painter's scaffolding at the risk of spoiling his clothes than take the trouble of stepping off the pavement.—Well, Mr. Parkinson, here you are at last," cried she, as he entered the drawing-room, "never caring how long you keep dinner waiting. There! Do you know who that young lady is? Some one you little expected to see, I imagine. Come now! Don't you see a likeness?"

Now, the events of the day had so completely obliterated the subject and cause of the breakfast-table dialogue from Mr. Parkinson's memory, that he was perfectly forgetful that a person of the name of Hannah Wellford was even in existence. He therefore looked as a man does who feels that he *ought* to know some one whom he does *not* know, while Hannah, for the second time, was subjected to the unpleasant predicament of having her features examined one by one for the sake of detecting a likeness.

"Upon my honour. Some one whom I ought to be ashamed of not recollecting, I dare say," said he, bowing apologetically, "but my memory is so treacherous—"

"Do look at her eyes, Mr. Parkinson," cried his wife, impatiently, "don't they remind you of any one?"

"Why, now you ask me, I think they do," said he. "Surely, not one of the Miss Smyths?"

"The Miss Smyths! Bless me what a miserable guesser you are! It is your niece, Hannah Wellford!"

"Hannah Wellford!" repeated he, with the greatest surprise, "this is an unexpected pleasure!"

And, shaking her very cordially by the hand in the first place, he secondly gave her a very affectionate kiss.

"This is a pleasant surprise, indeed, my dear," said he.

"A pleasant surprise!" repeated his wife, contemptuously, "but how blind you were, Mr. Parkinson, to see no family likeness."

"Why, my dear," said he, after another scrutinizing examination, "it is so long, you know, since I have seen her mother."

"Her mother!" almost screamed Mrs. Parkinson. "Why, she's no more like sister Kate, than—than I'm like Hyder Ally! Is not she extremely like me?"

"Like *you*, my love?"

"Well,—like what I *was*—"

"Why,—now you say so,—" rejoined Mr. Parkinson, looking from one to the other, "there certainly is a kind of,—something, as you observe, about the eyes. Oh, I see it plainly now. I told

you they reminded me of some one's, though, at the moment, I could not for the life of me tell whose. Well, I am glad to see you, Hannah. All well, when you heard last from home, hey? I must content myself now with generals, and wait till dinner time for particulars. I will not detain you a moment—"

"Dinner has been announced, Mr. Parkinson."

"Two minutes, only, my love, to wash my hands."

"This is always the way," she observved, sotto voce, "the fish will not be worth eating."

Mr. Parkinson's ablutions, however, were performed with incredible celerity, and he soon returned to accompany his wife and niece down stairs. As the light of the sinumbra lamp fell full on his face, Hannah could not help admiring the cheerful placidity of his smiling features, and the clear, lofty brow which Time had robbed of hair, but had left unstamped with a single wrinkle. Mrs. Parkinson, on the contrary, looked as much older than she really was as her husband looked younger. A skin of sickly fairness was tightly stretched over features to which, whatever might once have been their regularity, Hannah could be little flattered at being supposed to bear resemblance; she was remarkably thin; and there was a certain sharpness of the nose and chin, and con-

traction of the forehead, which gave her face a far from prepossessing expression.

"Well, Mr. Parkinson," began the lady as soon as they sat down to table, "what said the coach-maker?"

"He said, my dear, we should have the carriage as soon as possible."

"That was no promise at all. Who, but you, would have been put off with such an answer?"

"What would you have had him say, my dear? He could not have said as soon as *impossible*, could he?"

Hannah smiled. "Oh, we all know what tradespeople mean by as soon as possible," said Mrs. Parkinson. "As soon as suits their own convenience."

"Well, it will suit Mr. Dawson's convenience to let us have the carriage on Monday next."

"Now you are coming to the point. Did he say so for certain?"

"No, my love, nothing is certain but death."

"It is certain that you are a very tiresome man," observed Mrs. Parkinson. Her husband did not appear to hear her.

"Well, Hannah," said he, "you have not told me yet how you came to be here."

"Because I invited her, to be sure," said Mrs. Parkinson.

" Well, my dear, but I did not know you had any such intention. Indeed, I thought—"

" What does it signify, Mr. Parkinson, what you thought? Don't you take cayenne?"

" My dear?" (in a *deaf* voice.)

" I say, why don't you take some cayenne?"

" Jones, take the cayenne to your mistress. My dear, shall I have the pleasure of taking wine with you? Hannah, you will join us. How long have you left home?"

" About six weeks, sir."

" Were you ever in town before?"

" Never, sir."

" How do you like it?"

Hannah laughed, and after a little hesitation, said there was a great deal to entertain, but also to weary, and that she should be glad to return to Summerfield.

" Have you been very gay?"

" I hardly know whether I have, according to the general acceptation of the word. Mrs. Ponsonby goes out to parties every night, and sometimes to two or three in the same evening, and calls herself very quiet."

" Mrs. Ponsonby is wearing herself out," said Mrs. Parkinson, " she looks quite jaded already. The mother of a family too! Shocking! Shame-

ful! I should not wonder if she were to go into a consumption."

"I hope not," said Hannah. "I do not think her colour appears hectic."

"Rouge," said her aunt contemptuously. "The other sisters don't seem to go off, in spite of her taking them about, every where. Isabella really looks quite old. She has a horrid complexion. That young man too, Lewis, seems to be going on oddly, by all accounts. I understand he was to have been brought up to the law; but instead of this, after wasting a fortune on his education, sending him to college and all, his father lets him wander over the continent, nobody knows where. All because an uncle of his, old Miles Pennington, left him two or three hundred a year, just enough to make him fancy himself independent. I always said how it would be. I thought the doctor would lose all control over him by bringing him up at home, instead of sending him to be broken in at a public school. Quite a spoilt boy: and now petted up by his mother and sisters as if there was not such another young man in the world. And not the eldest son, after all. Poor Captain Pennington quite forgotten. Never heard of; or at any rate, never talked of. Perhaps they have good reason for knowing that the less that's

said of him, the better. How odd it is, too, their still keeping on that governess! The most absurd thing I ever heard in my life. All the girls are grown up now, except Clara, who surely might say her lessons to Marianne. Really, worse than absurd, considering that with such a large family, the doctor can ill afford Ma'amselle's keep and salary. I imagine Ma'amselle does n't get much; and acts a good deal like a kind of upper servant, keeping the keys, looking after the maids, and doing needlework. That's the only way of accounting for it. Mrs. Pennington, too, is growing sickly now, and wants a nurse; and it is not every one that would please her. One day, when I called there, Ma'amselle had the assurance to sit up and entertain me as if she was one of the family. I shewed what I thought of it. I can never tell what to make of Marianne. She never leaves home, never comes to town like her sisters. There must certainly be something odd about her, whether temper or what. They are all odd. The doctor, himself, remarkably odd. Marianne is decidedly his favourite. Perhaps that may be the reason why the two elder ones are out so much; she may not make home very agreeable to them. Mrs. Trotter thinks her methodistical. Very likely. Plain girls often are. Marianne is excessively

plain. The youngest girl has something of a squint."

"Pray, my dear," said Mr. Parkinson to Hannah when the cloth was removed, "have your father's relations taken any notice of you since you came to town?"

"Only Mrs. Ponsonby, sir. I am not aware that any near relations of my father's are in London."

"Ah, that's because you know nothing of the matter," said Mrs. Parkinson significantly; "there are one or two connexions of your father's that your mother would not be so very fond of talking to you about. A linen draper on Ludgate Hill! And another, a Tom Wellford, who turned out very bad indeed.—"

"I have heard my mother mention both, ma'am," said Hannah gently, "but they are very distant connexions. My father was the son of an only child and *had* no very near relations."

"Tom Wellford was about as near as Dr. Pennington, though; however, I believe he is at Botany Bay, or somewhere,—at present. Certainly, not in the kingdom."

"Nobody is answerable for all their relations," observed Mr. Parkinson, filling his glass.

"No, indeed," said his lady, drawing herself up, "it would be hard if they were!"

"Well, here is to Rosina, and all friends at Summerfield. I met John Wickstead, this morning."

"Did you indeed? What did he say?"

"He said it was a very fine day."

"James came in just before dinner."

"Why did not he stay?"

"He was engaged to a friend, and was going afterwards to the play."

"Ah, young men will be young men. I recollect when I used to be fond of a play myself."

Mr. Parkinson soon afterwards went to sleep. "This is always the way," muttered his wife, curling her lip. "No companion to me, you see, in the world! How should you like to come and live with me?"

"You are very kind," said Hannah hastily, "but I *could* not leave my mother."

"Oh, do not frighten yourself," said her aunt peevishly, "I did not invite you to come; I only said, how should you like it. There would be a little difference, I fancy, between the style in which *we* live and the company *we* keep, and the poking kind of life you lead with your old Lady Worral.—Certainly Kate is to be envied for one thing," said she after a pause, "the having a family so attached to her. She always had a kind of way that made every one her friend. If Rosina

had not been so excessively fond of her, she never would have run away from me. She might have grown up with us and have been a comfort to me by this time, for I really felt quite like a mother towards her. So anxious and indulgent as I was!—Old Mrs. Trotter used to say the only fear was of my spoiling her. But Mrs. Pennington *would* interfere, and take all the mannagement of her education on herself, which considering she had never thought of sending for her, was very unjust; and what *could* be the natural consequence, but that the ties of obedience and gratitude should be loosened, and the child set against me, by Lewis and Marianne, and all of them?—And Ma'amselle, as deep as any one! A shameful business. All, for Mrs. Pennington to be able to say, that *she* took all the trouble off my hands, of educating one of poor Harry Wellford's children. Oh Hannah, it was too bad!—And then, coming, as she did afterwards, with her hypocritical suavity of manner, to pretend to make peace, when Lewis had been at the bottom of all the mischief.—It was abominable!"

Mrs. Parkinson had not had the enjoyment of grumbling to so exemplary a listener for some time; and by tea-time she had really grumbled herself into good-humour.

"Suppose we have three-handed cribbage,"

said she gaily when the tea-tray was removed. "Can you play cribbage, Hannah?"

Hannah replied in the affirmative, and cribbage was the order of the evening.

Something happened to be said of Miss Patty Wilkins. "I must call on her before I leave town," said Mrs. Parkinson patronizingly, "Patty Wilkins is a good creature. She is always so delighted to see me, and so grateful for the attention, and so rejoiced to be able to talk of *those happy times* she has spent at *dear* Stoke Barton! She was always a favourite of mine. I think I will drive to Chelsea to-morrow; and I will call for you, Hannah, in my way."

Hannah was much obliged, and perfectly willing to visit Miss Wilkins, if Lady Worral could spare her. She asked whether her aunt had seen Mrs. Dawes during her present stay in London.

"I just looked in on her," said Mrs. Parkinson scornfully, "she would be so vastly hurt if I had not called; but I was really driven away by the fumes of onions; for they were dining early, and seeing the carriage draw up, Mrs. Dawes *would* not be denied, but followed me close up to the drawing-room, and acknowledged they had a shoulder of mutton and onion-sauce for dinner. I really could not stand it; Charlotte was very sorry

that it had happened so, but it could not be helped; and her mother actually asked me, in her coarse way, as she followed me down stairs, if I would come in and lunch with them. I should think old Dawes must be making money."

At the conclusion of the evening, when Hannah had left her aunt and uncle, Mr. Parkinson observed to his wife that she was a very nice girl.

"You may depend upon it," returned Mrs. Parkinson, "that she is neither more nor less than hired companion to Lady Worral during this visit to London. I took notice of the reservation she made once or twice, about 'being spared.' The old lady wanted somebody to lead her about, and nurse her, and write letters for her. *That* is the plain state of the matter! I shall not get out of the carriage to-morrow, I promise her—*I* have no wish to scrape up an acquaintance with her Lady Worral. My visiting circle is large enough and too large already!"

CHAPTER VI.

INDIA SHAWLS.

On Hannah's return, she found Lady Worral seated in the drawing-room, with a green shade over her eyes.

"I did not expect to find you still up, ma'am," said she.

"Still up, child! Why, what o'clock do you think it is?"

"Rather late, is it not?"

"Just ten! Did I send for you too soon?"

"Oh no, ma'am."

"Have you had a pleasant evening?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you."

"So I perceive," said Lady Worral smiling. "Well, was there any body to meet you?"

"No, ma'am."

"And what did you talk about?"

"Oh—my aunt tried to persuade my uncle that we were very much alike."

"Humph!—Well?"

"And she asked me how we went on."

"Went on!—How?"

"How many servants my mother kept, and what poultry, and pigs, and how we dressed, and what we had for dinner; and—and so on."

"Very entertaining indeed. She found out, Hannah, I suppose, as I have done, that you were too stupid to be able to talk about any thing better—hey?"

Hannah laughed, and said she did not think she had been fairly tried.

"Well; and what then?"

"Then, my uncle asked me, at dinner time, what I thought of London."

"Well?"

"And after dinner, he drank Rosina's health, and went to sleep."

"Well?"

"After tea, we played cribbage till I came away."

"A delectable visit indeed! Just such as I supposed you would have. Why, Hannah, you would have been no worse off if you had stayed at home to play cribbage with *me*. And Matthew has been here."

"Has he? Oh, how sorry I am."

"That is very selfish of you. He supplied your place very well, I assure you; made the tea, told me the news, read me the evening paper, and

played a game of backgammon. He told me my eyes were inflamed, and made me put on this shade. Oh, you cannot think how uncommonly handy he has been. I told him if I ever wanted to hire a companion, he should have the refusal of the situation. But don't be sorry, Hannah; that you have lost a pleasant evening. I prophesy that good will result from your uncle's drinking Rosina's health, and your aunt's discovery of your mutual resemblance."

The ride to Chelsea on the following day was as entertaining as might have been expected.—It was attended by one gratifying circumstance —on their return, Mrs. Parkinson stopped at a silk mercer's in Regent Street, and bought a very handsome dress which she gave Hannah for her mother. Hannah received it with gratitude and pleasure, as a token of reconciliation. Mrs. Parkinson then drew up the glass, and pompously observing that Hannah must have many expenses in London, offered her five guineas. This sorely wounded Hannah's pride; she drew back, colouring, and assured her aunt that she had more than enough, and could not think of accepting it. No one could be more pertinacious, however, than Mrs. Parkinson, in conferring an unwelcome obligation, and after a serious contest, Hannah, fear-

ful of really offending her, was forced, however reluctantly, to pocket the present.

The travelling carriage being finished on Monday, according to promise, there was nothing to detain Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson any longer in town, and the day was fixed for their return to Stoke Barton. As her aunt had expressed some curiosity to see Matthew, Hannah persuaded him to accompany her when she went to pay her first and last morning visit in Great Cumberland Street. Matthew was not disposed to view his aunt in a very cordial light, and he drew up his head with a little *hauteur* as he entered the drawing room. Mrs. Parkinson was alone, in no very good humour, and took offence at the independence of Matt's look and tone: what business had *he* with pride? In short, they disliked each other at first sight; and a dialogue maintained drily by the young gentleman, and chillingly by the lady, which it was not even in Hannah's power to sweeten, was agreeably interrupted by the entrance of other morning visitors. The young Wellfords were now made to feel themselves of no consequence; and soon after this pleasing conviction dawned upon their minds, they withdrew.

"Detestable, cold, haughty, ill-tempered woman!" cried Matthew, as soon as he was at li-

berty to vent his indignation, " don't attempt to reconcile me to her, Hannah; the less we have of such relations the better. No wonder Rosina ran away from Park Place! No wonder my mother had an unhappy home! To think of her asking, too, when *your engagement with* Lady Worral would terminate—as if you were receiving wages! My board and lodging too! Pitiful spite, to stoop so low for sarcasm!"

Lady Worral had a genuine woman's love of shopping for shopping's sake. So many years had elapsed since she had last visited London, that Regent Street and the Soho bazaar were novelties to her; and the latter, especially, she found irresistible. When the daily drive or circle of visits was over, Hannah always listened for the regular " to the bazaar—" where, with many things that were, or might be wanted, many others were bought which never *could* be wanted, merely because they were new, pretty, or odd. Here, too, Hannah laid out part of her aunt Parkinson's donation, in presents for her mother and sister. In spite of Lady Worral's visits to almost every shop at the west end of the town, her India shawl was still unbought, and her India chintz unmatched; therefore, as the time appointed for her return to Okely Park was drawing very near, she resolved to try what could be found at Everington's on

Ludgate Hill. Here every variety of shawl and scarf was submitted to her choice, from the costly Cashmere which might have formed the turban of the king of Persia, to the British imitation which the initiated alone could have detected as home manufacture. The decision was puzzling: now one, now another was preferred, and Hannah was called on to give her opinion.

"I like the white best," said Hannah, "but as you seem to prefer the scarlet, I should advise your ladyship to be ruled by your own taste, not mine."

"The scarlet is the most expensive."

"Yes, but I admire the border of the white."

"Well," said Lady Worral, "I will have them both. A shawl is always useful." So she paid the fifty guineas, and instead of re-entering the carriage, walked down Ludgate Hill, looking in at the windows.

"There's my chintz!" cried she, darting into a shop. Hannah followed her; the crumpled fragment was produced from the purse, the patterns compared, and pronounced to be so very nearly alike, that they might pass for the same; and the seven yards were measured off. But now an altercation arose as to the price. The shopman stated it at two shillings and seven pence halfpenny a yard, and Lady Worral maintained that

he had tacked on the seven pence, and refused to make the purchase at that price. The contest became so vehement as to attract the attention of every one in the shop: the master came up, looked at the mark, and said that his shopman was right. Lady Worral rejoined that the price *might* be two and seven pence halfpenny, but that it had been stated to her on her entrance at two shillings and one halfpenny, which was as much as it was worth. The shopman became impertinent, the master haughty, the customers sarcastic, and Lady Worral quitted the shop in high dudgeon, followed by Hannah blushing at the sensation they had created, and wondering how Lady Worral, who had just laid out twenty guineas on a supernumerary shawl, could grudge four shillings and a penny on an article which she had spent a month in fruitlessly seeking. When they had re-entered the carriage, Lady Worral's wrath evaporated in such expressions as "saucy fellow!—scandalous trick!—abominable imposition!" and then growing somewhat calmer, she untied the shawls, laid the white one on Hannah's lap, and patting it down, said—

"There, my dear, that's for you. Do not wear it on wet days, or thrust it all in a crumple into your drawer, but use it carefully and it will last you a long time."

Hannah was much surprised at so handsome a present. Lady Worral cut short her thanks by bidding her hold her tongue and say no more about it. After obeying this injunction for a few minutes, Hannah resumed with,

"But, Lady Worral—"

"What now?" said she abruptly.

"I was going to make a very bold request," said Hannah, colouring deeply,—"perhaps an improper one, considering how kind you have been to me—"

"Well, what is it?—Do not make so many words about it."

"I was going to ask your ladyship's permission to give this shawl to my mother. It is too good for me; and—"

"You are an odd sort of girl. Give it to her if you like.—Now, Hannah," resumed Lady Worral after a pause, "I cannot afford to give you another twenty guinea shawl—"

"Oh, Lady Worral! I—"

"Hush, listen to me. I have determined to give you something, to prove that I have not been insensible to the attachment you have shewn to me; and that something shall still be a shawl; because your mother will then have no excuse for returning that which you intend for her on your hands. Five guineas is as far as I shall go for

you; it will buy you a very pretty, genteel looking shawl, though not so elegant as this; and as your aunt Parkinson gave you five guineas, you can, if you are disposed to be generous, buy one to match your own, for Rosina."

"Certainly," said Hannah, delighted to remember that she had still enough pocket money to make up the five guineas complete. The whole transaction was creditable to both parties.

And now the letter was written which fixed the day for their immediate return.

CHAPTER VII.

MINOR MISERIES.

Rosina had in the mean time not been without her trials. In the first place, she missed Hannah even more than she had anticipated. She could not imagine how the loss of so quiet a person came to be so much felt, and at length settled it in her own mind that Hannah must have been a great talker, though, from her soft way of speaking, nobody found it out. Mr. Russell seemed as much at a loss as herself, and she could scarcely walk through the village without some one's stopping her to inquire "when Miss Hannah might be expected back." There was some comfort, certainly, in calling upon the Miss Greenways; but the Miss Greenways were themselves soon going to London, and were so full of delight and bustle that they could neither talk nor think of any thing else. To add to her chagrin, Rosina received a letter from Marianne Pennington, so full of an account of a fire at Stoke Barton as to leave no room even for a line respecting Lewis's movements, except in the following

hasty postscript, just under the seal. "We expect my brother to return to England in the autumn. He is engaged to be married to a lady whom he has met abroad,—a widow, with a very large fortune. I must say, I feel rather a foolish dread that we shall not like our new relation; I know not why, for he assures us that she is very amiable, beautiful, and accomplished." "Rather a *foolish* dread!" repeated Rosina, greatly disturbed. How was it possible to hear of Lewis's engagement without emotion? A widow, too! And of large fortune! Surely Lewis could not be mercenary. Rosina did not like the idea at all: she had sometimes fancied that Lewis would one day or other revisit Summerfield, *unmarried*. What was it to her that Mr. Thompson's premises had caught fire, that the parish engine had been sent for, and that the flames had been seen ten miles off? What to her, that Mr. Joseph Thompson, junior, had been very active, and that Mr. William Thompson had, with great gallantry, borne off a large looking-glass uninjured? or that Miss Jacobson, in the delirium of alarm, had exclaimed, "Oh, what *shall* we do if the fire comes over the water?" and had run down the High Street without her shoes? Marianne had seldom written a worse letter:

Then, Mrs. Wellford took cold coming from church one very wet Sunday, and an indisposition followed which was rather alarming. She would not make Hannah uneasy, and therefore only casually mentioned that she had caught cold; but Mr. Good was called in, and poor Rosina had many an anxious hour. She was an excellent nurse; for affection sometimes supplies the place of experience; and now she learnt, almost for the first time, what anxiety was, and that health and tranquillity deserved the warm gratitude which she had been accustomed to consider due only to extraordinary happiness.

"I was just coming to inquire after your mother, Rosina," said Mr. Russell one day, meeting her in the lane.

"She is decidedly better, thank you."

"I am rejoiced to hear it. I was sure she was better, as soon as I saw you."

"I certainly should not have left her, if I had been unable to do so without uneasiness."

"Not only that, but you would not have looked so cheerful. You have seemed quite careworn lately."

"I *have* been careworn," said Rosina. "I have often wished for Hannah."

"I have no doubt of it, but every thing has been

ordered for the best. Your experience has done you good."

"It has in one respect, I know. Till the idea of losing my mother occurred to me, I never knew her value."

This was a subject which Rosina could not touch on without faultering, and she was glad that at this moment they reached a path leading to the vicarage, where Mr. Russell wished her good morning.

Hannah's letter, narrating her introduction to her aunt, and the subsequent invitation to dinner, gave unmixed satisfaction; for the uncertain state of Mrs. Wellford's health had lately brought her just into the frame of mind to wish to leave behind her, in the event of her death, as many friends as possible; and as Hannah, according to her wont, had stated particulars very succinctly, Rosina, whose remembrances of Park Place were softened by distance, saw every thing in bright colours, and was persuaded that her sister had had a very pleasant visit. Prone to acknowledge herself in the wrong, (though not quite so fond of being taken to task by others,) she had no doubt that she had in fact been a very headstrong, unmanageable little thing, when at Stoke Barton, and that her aunt Parkinson's temper was, in fact, no worse than that of most rich, sickly ladies, who

are unaccustomed to children, and have grown nervous and formal. A letter from Matthew to Harry in some measure undeceived her. "I went with Hannah," he wrote, "to see my aunt Parkinson on Tuesday, and it will be no great mortification to me if I never see her again. She received us coldly enough, and asked us so many impertinent questions, that I, who cannot boast Hannah's unalterable sweetness of temper, lost all patience with her. But she is our mother's sister, so I will say no more."

At length, the welcome news arrived that Lady Worral and Hannah would reach Summerfield on the evening of the following Wednesday. Wednesday, anxiously looked for, duly arrived, and Harry came over from Heeley to share the pleasure of the meeting. The tea was got ready, the watch repeatedly consulted; and though it was agreed that idle waiting made the time pass much more slowly, it was impossible to settle to any thing. Harry, who had been to the play, the night before, with Sam Good, was willing to talk of what he had seen, but was repeatedly interrupted by "I wonder when they will come—I wonder how Hannah will look." When the crisis drew near, Harry said he would walk up to the park, to welcome them on their arrival; and the time hung more on hand than ever when he was

gone. It grew dark; candles must be lighted: "no sound of wheels," said Rosina, despondingly; and at the same moment she caught sight of a white gown at the garden gate. So many packages had to be taken out of the carriage at Lady Worral's, that Hannah, finding her brother waiting for her at Okely Park, had agreed with him that it would save time to walk home. The meeting between the mother, daughter, and sister, failed in none of its anticipated happiness.

"How well you look!" exclaimed Rosina, delightedly, as her sister took off her bonnet, "but, my dearest Hannah! what have you done to your hair? Bows and short curls? Oh, how *could* you spoil your beautiful Grecian braids?"

"Do not you approve of my new style of hairdressing? I modernized it entirely to please Matthew, who did not like me to look different from every one else."

"Well, I am not sure that your London fashion is not the most becoming," said Mrs. Wellford.

"I think it is decidedly," said Harry.

"It is not ugly, certainly," said Rosina, reluctantly, "but it quite alters the character of your face. Now you look smart and pretty, but, before, you were picturesque."

"I preferred the old way myself," said Hannah, "which saved me a great deal of trouble, but I

wished to please Matthew, and knew my hair would soon grow long again."

"Tea is ready—I am tea-maker now, Hannah. —I will make it in future for you, if you like."

"Just as *you* like, but I am in no humour to give up all my old employments. I shall return to them with more fondness than ever."

"Some cream, Rosy," said Harry.

"You have given me no sugar," said Mrs. Wellford.

"You are voted incompetent," said Harry.

"Stay, stay, I have given each the wrong cup. Now don't take this, Hannah, as a specimen of my abilities. I have been bewildered by the pleasure of seeng you. So you had no adventures on the journey?"

"None whatever."

"And Matthew is quite well?"

"Quite well. But, my dear mother, *you* are not looking well, I think. You are paler and thinner than when I left you."

"I have had rather a severe attack of cold, my dear, which has given Mr. Good some trouble to cure, and Rosina an opportunity of proving herself an excellent nurse; that is all. You cannot think how clever she is at making jelly and blancmange."

"But, Mr. Good—? You must have been se-

riously ill if you were obliged to call him in," said Hannah, anxiously. "Why did you tell me nothing of this in your letters?"

"What, frighten you out of your wits, when you were on the eve of going to one of Mrs. Lavenu's *soirées*? That would never have done. No, my dear, there was no real occasion for your being summoned home; and till there was, I did not feel justified in hurrying you away from Lady Worral, or making you uneasy while you remained with her."

"Still, I do not like this plan, mamma. Even now that all has turned out for the best, I cannot help being sorry that you kept any part of the truth from me; and, supposing you had grown worse, how much more the bad news would have shocked me than if I had been gradually prepared for it! Pray, my dear mother, do not deceive me so, again."

"Why, what a wilful self-tormentor you must be," said Mrs. Wellford, "to wish to subject yourself to useless uneasiness! Unless you could have left Lady Worral, do not you see that your knowing I was ill would have done me no good?"

"And do not *you* see," persisted Hannah, earnestly, "that if I were again separated from you, I should be unable to feel perfectly satisfied with

your letters, because I had already found that you kept back painful truths from me?"

"Well, perhaps you may be right, and I may have been wrong," said Mrs. Wellford, "but I did all for the best. You need not feel any alarm for me now, for Mr. Good has taken his leave, and I am gaining strength every day."

"And is every body else quite well? How is Mr. Russell?"

"Overjoyed at the news of your return, I assure you," said Rosina. "He asked me with great anxiety this morning whether it was quite certain you were coming home to night. Now do tell us every thing that has happened since the very day you left us. Begin at the beginning."

Thus entreated, Hannah endeavoured to comply with the request as far as was in her power; and it was no wonder that with so much to be related and commented on, no note was taken of time till the clock struck twelve.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REAL SIMON PURE.

MR. RUSSELL the next day called as early as politeness warranted. Hannah had just been distributing her presents, and was folding up the shawls when he entered.

"How do you do, Mr. Russell?" said she, holding out her hand with a frank smile. "In spite of all your evil prognostications, you see I have returned to Summerfield exactly such as I left it."

"How can you say so," cried Rosina, "when you have spoilt your hair, 'the glory of a woman!' Join with me, Mr. Russell, in scolding her for it."

"I had not taken notice of the change," said he smiling, "but I perceive it now. Yes, I regret the Grecian bands, both as elegant in themselves and as connected with old associations, though curls are doubtless more fashionable; but

it matters little, when the countenance and the heart are the same."

"Now, I think," said Mrs. Wellford, "that curls make Hannah look younger."

"Why should you wish her to look younger?" cried he quickly. "Surely, at three and twenty, there is no need of study to look more juvenile! Well, Hannah, your visit has been rather a gay one, has not it? Your sister led me to understand so."

"Yes, much more gay than I expected. Lady Worral had a great many friends in London, and Matthew shewed me almost every thing that was worth seeing."

"And your eyes have, of course, been so dazzled, that every thing here looks inexpressibly mean and small."

"Not at all. I began to pine for green fields long before we left town; and I saw nothing so pretty on our journey homeward as the finger post on which I read 'To Summerfield.'"

"Come, that is very virtuous," said Mr. Russell, with more pleasure than he liked to express.

"But I should have been very sorry not to have seen a great deal that I *have* seen. There were many things which I shall remember all the rest

of my life: St. Paul's, for instance. What a magnificent building! I shall never forget how I felt when I stood beneath that immense dome."

"Pray tell us how you felt," said Rosina.

"Oh, I do not know whether I can. That is quite a different thing!"

"Tell us what you thought, then—what ideas it impressed you with."

"Just the same, I suppose, with which it would impress every one else who stood there for the first time. The very atmosphere, so different from the close, heated air without, seemed that of devotion."

"Yet this sublime building did not appear to excite a moment's notice in any one that passed. They were hurried, and pushed, and bustled at its base, yet with an eye to every trifling novelty in the shops, every strangely dressed passenger, every beggar, placard, and carriage; but not a glance bestowed on that noble cathedral, except to see what it was o'clock. It occupied as little space in the thoughts of passers by, as religion does in most of our hearts. All, out of doors, noise, confusion, and bustle; within, all peace, twilight, and repose;—a city of the dead in the midst of clamour! Of course, the same might be said of *every* church in a crowded city; but I was unaccustomed to churches in crowded cities."

"These are London purchases, I suppose, "said Mr. Russell, taking up some engravings, "they seem pretty. 'A girl at her devotions.' Humph! gazing on her lover's picture. 'A girl at her studies.' Sound asleep, with the book falling out of her hand!—This Mr. Newton seems a very satirical gentleman. 'El sepulchro de una madre.' Why a Spanish title should be affixed to an English print of English children in an English churchyard, I cannot imagine. It savours of affectation. However, it is a pretty thing. Westall's children are better than his ladies,—more natural, less theatrical."

"I think it must be a Welsh churchyard," said Mrs. Wellford.—"The practice of strewing flowers on English graves seems extinct. Mrs. Good, who spent some time in Brecknockshire, the year before last, told me that the churchyard of the village in which she was staying was beautifully planted with roses, carnations, mignionette and evergreens, and that a family of orphans who had recently lost their father, removed the withered flowers from his tombstone every morning and spread it with fresh bouquets. She understood that they would continue to do so for a twelvemonth. It is a pretty custom."

"Very pretty. Any little service, any little respect we can pay to those we have lost, is

soothing. I should think that custom of strewing and planting flowers has alleviated the affliction of many an innocent mind. It is one of those poetical old customs of which I am inclined to lament the decay.—Have you been buying music too, Hannah?"

"I bought it, but Sophy Pennington recommended it. I did not feel quite confidence enough in my own judgment."

"The Penningtons are in town, then. Staying with Mrs. Ponsonby, I suppose. Pray, what do you think of them?"

"They are rather fine young women, though not so handsome as their eldest sister. Isabella has no colour, but very fine dark eyes. Sophy is very tall, with rather a round face, blue eyes, and very clear complexion. I like her the best; she has more frankness of manner than Isabella."

"And where is Lewis?"

"Still in Italy."

"Lewis is going to be married," observed Rosina.

"Indeed?—I did not hear that."

"Yes: I heard so, from Marianne. To a very rich widow."

"Oh, that is Captain Pennington, the elder brother."

"No, surely!"

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Ponsonby told me so."

Rosina changed colour. "I had entirely forgotten Captain Pennington," said she. "Marianne said *her brother*—"

"Yes, that is, her eldest brother. They always speak of Captain Pennington as 'my brother,' to the exclusion of poor Lewis, who, however, seems much the greatest favourite of the two. That explains the mistake."

"Well, I am glad of it," said Rosina unguardedly.

"Why so?" said Mr. Russell.

"Why so?" repeated she, rather disconcerted—"Oh,—because it would be a pity for Lewis Pennington to marry an old, disagreeable widow."

"How do you know that the widow in question *is* old and disagreeable?" persisted he.

"Well, at any rate, she is very rich."

"But because some very amiable young ladies happen to be poor, does it thence ensue that all who are rich must be unamiable?"

"No, certainly not!" said Rosina. "Oh! I dare say the lady has a thousand good qualities."

"Undoubtedly—since she is to marry the *captain*," said Mr. Russell with a smile.

"It is a matter of perfect unconcern to me, *whom* she marries," said Rosina.

"So I see," said Mr. Russell, taking up his

hat—"I don't accuse *you*, Rosina, of assuming indifference!"

"It is extremely droll, though very provoking," said Rosina when he was gone, "to see people like Mr. Russell pretend to be very wise and penetrating, when they are neither one nor the other!"

Hannah was anxious to revisit her garden, and her favourite walks. The pleasure of seeing hedge-rows and meadows in full spring beauty almost repaid her for not having watched them bursting into flower. Rosina was quite amused by the eagerness with which she hurried from place to place, and the delight with which she recognized her old acquaintance in her walks.

"I have seen nothing like this since I left Summerfield!" she exclaimed, as she stood looking down on the valley near the seat beneath the churchyard. Rosina remembered that this was the spot on which they had been first met by Lewis Pennington, and she wondered whether Hannah were thinking of her walk with Huntley on that evening. But not a shade was on Hannah's face; nothing clouded her enjoyment of the present moment.

A few days after her return, she and Rosina set out with a little basket, to take up some plants which they had observed growing in Mr. Hol-

land's meadows. They had quitted the lane, when Rosina observed that she had meant to bring a trowel with her, and ran back to fetch it, telling Hannah she might walk on. Hannah reached the wooden bridge which crossed the river, lingered on it for some time, wondering Rosina did not join her, and then walked on to a sunny bank at a little distance, where she sat down to wait for her. She presently detected the smell of violets, sought them out in the shade, gathered them, and again sat down to examine and admire them. They reminded her of an almost forgotten copy of verses which had long been treasured in her pocket book. She drew it out and began to read them with less emotion than they had once excited, though with the lingering partiality which their subject made excusable. They are certainly very pretty," thought she. "The only verses, which, I believe, Mr. Huntley was ever guilty of writing." At this moment she was startled by a footstep very near her, and looking up hastily, she saw, not Rosina, but Mr. Russell.

"Good morning," said she, colouring, and shutting up her pocket book as she rose.

"Good morning, Hannah. You have found out a pleasant, sheltered seat."

"I am waiting for Rosina, who is going to walk with me to the meadows beyond the copse."

"This is a delightful morning for your ramble," said Mr. Russell, sitting down on the bank, and looking round. "What is this?" said he, picking up something which lay at his feet.

"Oh dear! It is mine!" cried Hannah, perceiving with a little alarm that she had dropped the copy of verses, which she thought were safely replaced in her pocket book.

Mr. Russell, in taking it up, had glanced at the writing. "Hannah," said he, with some surprize, detaining the paper for which her hand was eagerly extended, "how did you come by this?"

"How can it possibly concern you to know?" replied she, hastily taking it.

"As much as any thing concerns me that happens to be mine," said he.

"You have made some mistake," said Hannah. "How can a drawing be yours which I never gave away?"

"However that may be—just answer me one question. Where did you find it?"

"Find it?" she repeated with surprise. "I took the paper from my portfolio, drew the flowers on it, and replaced it."

"And did you never miss it?" resumed Mr. Russell. Hannah slightly coloured. "I certainly did," said she.

"And where did you find it again?"

"In my portfolio."

"That is inexplicable," he exclaimed. "Who, then, did you suppose to be the author of the verses?"

"I thought," said Hannah, after a moment's silence, "that they were Mr. Huntley's."

"Huntley's!" exclaimed the astonished vicar. After a pause, he said with a half contrite look, "Hannah! they were mine!"

"*Your* verses, Mr. Russell?" said Hannah, with great surprise. "I never thought,—I had no idea," said she, "that you were a poet."

"I hope I have not irreparably forfeited your good opinion by the discovery," said Mr. Russell, laughing, but with a little awkwardness; for one *does* feel rather awkward when detected in rhyming for the first time.

"How is it possible?" inquired Hannah. "Dear me! how very odd it seems that these verses should be your's!" And she began to read them again, in a new light. Mr. Russell endeavoured to obtain a glance at her countenance, but it was hidden from him by her bonnet. His heart beat quickly.

"Pray," said Hannah, suddenly, "how did you come into possession of this drawing, after all?"

"You gave it me yourself."

"I?"

"Yes, you sent home some books wrapt in it. The drawing was fairly mine. And now, I suppose, your next questions will be, how I came to make you the theme of my verse, and when I first had the audacity to hope that the time might come, when—Nay, here me out, Hannah," said he, taking her hand, "you owe me so much grace at any rate, even if you accuse me of folly and presumption."

"Who could bring such an accusation against Mr. Russell?" said Hannah.

"But was not it folly and presumption, to trust, that in spite of the disadvantage of my staid, old bachelor manners, and the danger of younger rivals, the time would come when esteem might ripen into a warmer feeling? In short, Hannah, to indulge in the hope that you would love me?—Speak, Hannah; tell me that I have not forfeited every thing by this confession.—Say that we are still friends; give me something, however remotely, to hope, and you shall find that—"

"Pray, say no more," said Hannah, with cheeks dyed with blushes. "This was so very unexpected—"

"Unexpected," pursued Mr. Russell, "because you *would* not see what would have been plain as

daylight to any woman in your place, and because you have such a faulty persuasion of your own want of attractions, as never to calculate what must be the natural and inevitable consequence of knowing you. And how have I known you? Not as a common acquaintance, not as an accidental companion in dissipated, frivolous society, where heartlessness is a requisite, if not a virtue; but growing up in goodness and beauty, in a home as peaceful as yourself, beloved by all around you; and, what has been most irresistible of all, I have been treated by you from the first, as an intimate friend. I have known you in sorrow, Hannah, I have seen you severely tried; you have been endeared to me by suffering. You have looked to me for advice and sympathy; I can scarcely tell how short a time we had been acquainted, when you seemed to confide in me and refer to my opinions on all occasions. How can you wonder that I should love you, almost to the exclusion of every other feeling?"

"You are very good," said Hannah, scarcely knowing what she said,—"I have always been proud of your good opinion, Mr. Russell, and should be sorry if our friendship should cease—"

"It would drive me to distraction," exclaimed he.

"But," she pursued, moving away as she spoke, "more than friendship I have not to promise—"

"Oh Hannah, do not say so!"

"At any rate, Mr. Russell, it must be long before—"

"Before you will promise to be mine. But, in the mean time, Hannah, learn to think that the time *will* come. Let us continue on the same terms that we have been hitherto, with the addition that a softer, deeper feeling shall be suffered to arise, cherished on your part and unreproved on mine."

"*Cherished* on my part," repeated Hannah, trying to laugh, "the terms are hardly equal, I think."

"*My* love requires no cherishing. It has long demanded all my strength to prevent it from blazing out. Indeed, if you do not concede this, I shall think you unjustifiable—"

"Unjustifiable!"

"Yes, for you will rob me at once of what has been the guiding star of my life, and leaves me in dreary darkness. All my thoughts of happiness have been centered in you. You have given some foundation for them by your conduct. Do not make me the most miserable being on earth."

"I should be sorry to do that," said Hannah.

She was, meantime, quickly walking homewards. Mr. Russell maintained his station at her side, and continued to plead his suit with great earnestness. Hannah had acknowledged that she should be sorry to make him the most miserable man upon earth, and it now appeared from his representations that nothing could rescue him from that fate but being the most happy.

On gaining the little bridge, she was much relieved on seeing Rosina at a distance.

"One word, Hannah," said Mr. Russell.

"I can say no more than I have said already," replied she hastily, "that I shall be very sorry, Mr. Russell, to forfeit your friendship—"

"But let me hope, then—"

"You have taken me too much by surprise. Pray let us say no more of this, now. I never thought—I never supposed—"

"I must believe of *you*, Hannah, that you never *did* think or suppose, on this subject. I *can* believe it of you. But, now that you understand me, let me hope that in a day or two—Good morning," said he abruptly, as Rosina came within hearing distance.

CHAPTER IX.

HESITATION.

"WHAT has kept you so long?" said Hannah. "Mamma wanted me to answer a note from Mrs. Good," said Rosina, "and I wrote it in such haste as to leave out part of the message, and therefore had to write it again; and when it was finished, I found that the silly boy had gone away without asking whether he was to wait for an answer; and Betty was making bread, so that I had to take it myself. But what made Mr. Russell walk off so suddenly? And why were you walking so fast and looking so red? Has any thing happened?"

"Nothing particular—at least,—something particular *has* happened, but I cannot tell you about it just now."

"Then I guess what it must be!—Ten to one, Mr. Russell has made you an offer!"

"My dear Rosina!—"

"You know I have guessed the truth!—Oh I have foreseen how it would be, I cannot tell how

long. Before you went to London—Oh, long even before that. And, my dear Hannah, how is it all settled? Have you accepted him?"

"No."

"Refused him?"

"No."

"Well,—that is singular. Do you know your own mind?"

"Not quite, I believe, Rosina."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Consult my mother."

"The last thing I should have done!" said Rosina. "And yet, I do not know that it is a bad plan, either.—But surely, my dear Hannah, you know whether you like him or not!"

"Who can avoid liking Mr. Russell?" said Hannah.

"Nobody, *I* think," said Rosina, "and liking is almost the same as love. That is—I do not know that I should like to *set up* on esteem myself, but then you are so much older and more philosophical than I am; and Mr. Russell and you seem so expressly cut out for each other. You have both so much self denial and common sense, and yet with a vein of romance running beneath the surface of your dispositions."

"Do you think there *is* a vein of romance in Mr. Russell's disposition?" said Hannah.

"I am certain of it, Hannah. In spite of all his quiet humour and strait-forwardness, I am persuaded that he has a *great deal* of romance at heart. He certainly loves you to distraction. Mr. Russell's romance and capacity of loving take off ten years of his age."

Hannah seemed half inclined to be of the same opinion. "I do not think much of his age," said she, "you know I am not very young myself; and every year makes the difference less between us."

"Exactly so," said Rosina. "I do not wish to influence you, either one way or the other; but if you refuse him, I really should not be surprised if it were to break his heart. Those quiet people take things so seriously, and feel so deeply! I have no doubt, *now*, that he was attached to you before Mr. Huntley came to Summerfield. Poor Mr. Russell! how mortified and unhappy he must have been! No wonder I used to think him cross. Only fancy what his thoughts must have been during his long solitary evenings. Poor Mr. Russell! after waiting for you so many years!—And now, perhaps, to be disappointed at last! with nothing but a dreary, unsocial futurity to look to—Poor man!"

They had meanwhile been walking towards home instead of from it; and just as Rosina's pity

had reached its climax, they entered the garden. Hannah ran off to her own room; while Rosina, perceiving her mother in the arbour, hastened to tell her all she knew. Mrs. Wellford was very much rejoiced, and almost as much flurried as if the offer had been made to herself. After relieving her mind by a few exclamations, such as "This was what I always wished! I often thought it would come to this at last, and yet sometimes I began to fear it would never be so, after all!"—she went up to Hannah, whom she found leaning her head on her hand. Hannah rose and threw her arms round her mother's neck, averting her eyes, which were brimming with tears.

"My dearest Hannah," said Mrs. Wellford, "I would have you to be solely guided by your own feelings. If these tears are caused by any reluctance towards Mr. Russell, and a lingering affection for any one else, refuse him by all means."

"No," said Hannah, wiping away her tears, "I have no lingering affection for any one else, now. Mr. Huntley was not what I believed him; therefore it was not himself I was attached to, you know, mother, but only a dream—a supposition of imaginary, perhaps incompatible qualities, united in a manner in which they may never have existed. This was my error; but my fault was, continuing to think of him with partiality when I

had detected my mistake. I thought, that as all was at an end between us, I was injuring no one but myself; but now, it may be the cause of disappointment to a very excellent man. I respect and esteem Mr. Russell in the highest degree; but I cannot say that I love him,—not," she added colouring, "as I once loved Mr. Huntley. But perhaps esteem is a better foundation for happiness."

Her mother kissed her, and advised her to take time to ascertain her own feelings. Conscientiously afraid of biassing her by her own wishes, she kept on the prudent side, and had virtue enough to state all the objections which might be supposed deserving of any consideration—such as difference of age, small fortune, and former prepossessions. Hannah was thus led, without any art on her mother's side, to answer and oppose each objection in turn. She was not cool enough, she hoped, to marry for an establishment: Mr. Russell was quite rich enough, if that were all. And as to age,—surely there was not much disparity between twenty-three and five and thirty.

Hannah's twenty-third birthday had not yet arrived; and Mr. Russell had been looked upon in the village as thirty-five for more than a twelvemonth; therefore Mrs. Wellford augured favourably from this little instance of self-delusion, and left

Hannah to pursue her cogitations on the subject by herself.

On the following morning, as Rosina sat at work, she frequently looked out of the window, and at length exclaimed,

"It is very odd that Mr. Russell does not call!"

"Not at all," said Hannah hastily, "he promised not to come for a day or two."

"He will be very unlike a lover if he keeps his promise," cried Rosina.

"He will be very unlike Mr. Russell if he breaks it," said Mrs. Wellford.

"At any rate," said Rosina laughing, "if he said *a day, or two,* I should think he would prefer the shortest period; and the twenty-four hours are nearly past."

"He would never stoop to such a quibble as that," said Hannah rather indignantly.

Rosina again laughed but said nothing, she threw down her work, found her garden bonnet and rake, and sallied out to seek employment among her flower beds. "If Hannah already takes Mr. Russell's little affronts to herself," thought she, "*my* opinion is that he need not be afraid of a refusal. By the by, I recollect that she was rather vexed the other day by Lady Worral's saying, what business had Mr. Russell to keep

two maid servants? She coloured and bit her lip at the time, and said to me several hours after, when we were going to bed, 'Why should Lady Worral interfere with Mr. Russell's domestic management? It is no great thing, surely, for Mary White to have her little niece to help her. Surely Mr. Russell need not be taken to task for allowing her that accommodation.' Ah! I see how it will be! Mr. Russell will be a happy man!"

While speculating on Mr. Russell's happiness, an event rather out of the ordinary course, diverted Rosina's thoughts into a new channel. A handsome travelling carriage with post horses drove down the lane and stopped at the gate; and Rosina ran breathlessly into the parlour, exclaiming "My aunt Parkinson's liveries!"

Mrs. Wellford turned very pale, but Hannah, looking from the window, observed that the carriage was empty. The footman had in the mean time come up to the house; and Betty, looking both flurried and elated, came in with a letter in her hand, directed to Mrs. Wellford.

She hastily tore it open, and found it to contain a few lines from Mr. Parkinson, stating that his wife was dangerously ill with an attack of rheumatism at the heart, and that she was exceedingly desirous of seeing her sister and *both* her nieces.

The surprise and bustle occasioned in the little cottage by this unexpected summons, may be conceived. Mrs. Wellford, agitated and in tears, was alternately giving directions to her servant, assisting her daughters to pack up a travelling trunk, and referring to her brother-in-law's letter. Rosina, looking very serious, ran in and out with her mother's keys; and Hannah hastily wrote to Harry, to inform him of the reason of their sudden departure. She also wrote a brief note to Mr. Russell, to the same effect, which she gave in charge to Betty; and leaving their early dinner untouched, they commenced their journey.

CHAPTER X.

PARK PLACE.

Good roads and tolerable horses enabled them to reach Stoke Barton at eight o'clock. Rosina looked eagerly from side to side as they drove through the town, trying to recognize well known objects; and Hannah strained her eyes in endeavouring to pierce the gloom when they entered the park, but it was now so dusk that she could only make out black masses of trees. A few minutes' drive brought them in front of the portico. There were lights glancing to and fro in the hall, and the household seemed in confusion.

"I hope your mistress is not worse," said Mrs. Wellford anxiously to the first servant whom she met on the steps.

"Much the same, I believe, ma'am," he replied laconically. "Mr. Curtis is coming down stairs now." And having shewn them into the drawing room, he went to inform Mr. Parkinson of their arrival.

In another minute, Mr. Parkinson entered with

Mr. Curtis. He looked agitated and bewildered, and his eye turned from Rosina to her mother as if he recognized neither of them. Hannah first came forward, and held out her hand. His countenance immediately cleared, and he welcomed each in turn; saying as he shook hands with his sister-in-law, "Sad event, this, Mrs. Wellford, very sad indeed. A melancholy occasion for renewing our acquaintance. Poor Mrs. Parkinson has such an opinion of your nursing. It's almost the only thing she clings to now. Your mother, you know, used to have the same attacks very bad. Went off, at last, in the same way. Tut—tut!—there's no knowing how it may end. I was saying to Mr. Curtis, we really must call in more advice."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Curtis, running his fingers through his hair; "the attack, I acknowledge, is severe, and a consultation might be advisable. I assure you—a—Mr. Parkinson, that though perfectly competent and—a—confident in my own experience,—this is a sort of thing—a—and sort of case, in which I shall feel no offence at your doing whatever may be most conducive to your own satisfaction. Good evening." And he glided out with smiling suavity.

"Will you take some refreshment after your journey," pursued Mr. Parkinson, "or see your sister at

once? Her sufferings are excruciating, you know; it is quite dreadful to hear her breathe; but she is easier just now, and speaks more like herself, though weak beyond every thing."

Mrs. Wellford expressed her wish to see her at once, and Mr. Parkinson led the way up stairs, leaving the girls in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Parkinson was roaring piteously when her sister approached her bedside. "Oh Kate!" said she, speaking at intervals, "what a state you find me in!—How long you have been on the road!—Put back the curtain, Mr. Parkinson.—Dear me, Kate, how you are altered! But I am altered too, now.—I cannot last out long, unless you can tell of something that will relieve me. You used to be an excellent nurse. I remember, my poor mother to the last, always said nobody nursed her like you. I knew you would come and nurse me if I sent for you. Now, don't leave me for a moment, if you can help it.—I can't bear to be left.—Oh, but you won't be able to sit up with me to-night, I suppose, after your journey."

"I will certainly sit up with you, Hannah. I am not at all fatigued."

"Thank you.—Where are the girls? Are not they come?"

"They are down stairs, I did not know whether you might be well enough to see them."

"How do I know that I shall ever be better? Go, Hawkins, go this minute and bring up the young ladies. And you, Cummings, may go too, and remain in the dressing-room till you are wanted.—Oh! the misery of being dependent on servants!" cried she, as her attendants left the room. "Cummings is too fine a lady to be of the smallest use; and *I* know the motive of all Hawkins's softness and civility! Mercenary creature! And such a mistress as I have been to her! Always letting her have her own way—'As you will, Hawkins—do it as you please, Hawkins!' That has always been the word.—And now, how am I rewarded for it? I believe there is no such thing as gratitude in the world. Last night, Kate, when I lay, really expecting to die every minute, they had got themselves some toast and negus, and sat whispering and laughing over it, till I was out of all patience. So I had Mr. Parkinson called up, and told him to sit with me, and to send for you as soon as it was light; for said I, one's own relations are surely better than this!"

Hannah and Rosina now quietly entered the room. "Who's there?" cried Mrs. Parkinson. "Is it you, Hannah? I am glad to see you. But where's Rosina? Where's the child?"

And when Rosina approached, and bent over

her to kiss her, she returned the kiss with some emotion, and said "So you are come back, Rosina, to Park Place at last. Why did you ever leave me?"

Rosina turned away her head. "What a poor return that was," pursued her aunt "for all I had done for you! You little thought, when you set off in that ungrateful way, how we should meet again. Well, don't cry; I have forgiven you now, and I hope you will never leave Park Place any more."

Mrs. Parkinson's spasms now became so violent as to prevent her speaking. Mr. Parkinson signed to his nieces to accompany him down stairs; but Rosina's hand was convulsively held by her aunt, and as too many nurses are as inconvenient as too few, Hannah followed him out of the room. "This is nothing to the way she is in sometimes," whispered he as he closed the door carefully. "The best plan will be for you to nurse in turns; and dinner has been waiting for some time." Hannah had been waiting some time for dinner, insomuch that she had now no appetite; but she sat down to table with her uncle, who after reminding her that she had had a long journey, and observing with a sigh that starving herself would do no good to poor Mrs. Parkinson, seemed inclined to apply the latter remark to his own

case. He had, in fact, waited beyond his usual hour for his sister-in-law and nieces; and in spite of his affliction, was disposed to make a tolerably hearty meal. When the cloth was removed, he told Hannah a glass of wine would do her good, drank to his wife's better health, observed that her sufferings were very acute, but that Curtis had the best practice in the county, and that Dr. Dutton should be called in to-morrow. He then remarked that Rosina was grown out of all knowledge, after which, he fell asleep. Hannah rather wondered at his quiet way of taking things, but concluded that he must be of a very enviable temperament. She fixed her eyes on the portrait of a stern-looking old gentleman in a snuff-coloured coat, which she supposed was intended to represent her grandfather, and then raised one of the tall wax candles in its massy silver candlestick to a portrait in the corresponding pannel, of a placid-looking middle-aged lady with a turn-up nose and sleepy unmeaning blue eyes, dressed in a gown of yellow satin, which she was equally clever in guessing to be her grandmother.

A very different scene was passing above stairs. As night came on, Mrs. Parkinson's sufferings increased, and her impatience made them more painful to witness. The breathing, as her husband described it, was terrible to hear; and Ro-

sina was so much affected by the sight of agony which she was unable to alleviate, as to shed tears. Ill as Mrs. Parkinson was, this circumstance did not escape her notice. Towards midnight, Mrs. Wellford sent Rosina to bed, and likewise dismissed the housekeeper and lady's maid, who had sat up the two preceding nights. Hannah took her sister's place in the sick room. She had often acted as nurse before, and had much more self command and presence of mind than Rosina. Mrs. Parkinson felt this, yet if she liked Hannah best as a nurse, she preferred Rosina as a niece. At the conclusion of a very trying night, when Mr. Parkinson presented his anxious, good-natured face of inquiry at the door, Mrs. Wellford being unacquainted with the extent of her sister's sufferings previous to her arrival, was unable to tell him whether she was materially worse; but could only say that her illness had been of the most exhausting description. She now lay with her eyes closed, in a kind of stupor, without sign of life except her quick, short breathing. Mr. Parkinson was alarmed, and sent off immediately for Dr. Dutton. The physician soon arrived accompanied by Mr. Curtis, and pronounced that there was little hope of a recovery. When Mrs. Parkinson came to herself, she seemed sensible of her precarious situation. Mr. Parkinson

was left alone with her, at her particular request; after which, the lawyer and clergyman were sent for. To shorten a painful narrative, she endured great sufferings for three days after Mrs. Wellford's arrival, and then sank into a lethargic slumber which terminated in death.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD.

When a woman, from ill temper, bad conduct, or mere insignificance, has lost the power of exciting the interest and affection of her friends, "her only refuge is to die," as Goldsmith says. Tears flow, condolences pour in, and estimable qualities are remembered or fancied in the deceased, whose memory is thenceforth embalmed among those of the regretted and the good. Thus Mrs. Parkinson, who had scarcely a friend while living, was bewailed in death. Mrs. Trotter, who had been a kind of amateur toady at Park Place, shook her head, wiped her eyes, and declared she should never recover the loss of her poor dear friend; Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Turner, and Mrs. Humby observed to one another that Mrs. Parkinson's death in the very prime of life was very shocking indeed, and that Mr. Parkinson would probably never get over it. At Park Place, pity did almost the work of affection. Her husband, her sister, her nieces sincerely deplored her loss: yes, *sin-*

cerely, though, if their grief was of the kind which soon admits of alleviation, the fault was not to be laid to their want of sensibility, but to her want of attaching qualities. Their tears fell for her, rather than for themselves.

A very few days after the funeral, it was rumoured in Stoke Barton that the Wellfords were going to remain at Park Place. Mrs. Trotter turned up her hands and eyes, and ejaculated that she had dreaded they would fasten themselves upon poor easy Mr. Parkinson: what would Mrs. Parkinson say, if she could look out of her grave? The reporter hastened to add that it had been Mrs. Parkinson's dying wish and command. Mrs. Trotter sighed again, shook her head, said it was a fine thing for them, and very generous of Mrs. Parkinson after all the ingratitude she had experienced. But Mrs. Trotter soon found she stood alone in her opinions; few appeared to feel Mrs. Parkinson's death a great loss; few dreaded that the widower would long continue disconsolate; it was ascertained that the Wellfords had been handsomely provided for, and that Rosina had a large fortune. To think and talk of the Wellfords, therefore, became the order of the day.

Mrs. Parkinson's conduct had been characteristic to the last. Her heart had softened towards her sister, and she had determined to benefit her fa-

mily, but in such a manner as hardly to leave some of them free agents. There was also great inequality in her bequests. To Hannah and her brothers she left only one thousand pounds each, but without conditions. To Rosina, who in spite of her manifold offences, was the *favourite* to the last, ten thousand pounds,—*providing* she married with her uncle's consent. She was to reside at Park Place till married or of age, and Mr. Parkinson was constituted her sole guardian. To Mrs. Wellford, two thousand pounds, and the remaining fifteen thousand, to Mr. Parkinson to revert at his death to the surviving members of her sister's family. There were also mourning rings for James Parkinson, Mrs. Trotter, and others. Impressed with the idea that "poor Mr. Parkinson would never recover the loss of *such* a wife as she had been to him," she hoped Kate would never leave him; and of course, when Mrs. Wellford found the terms on which Rosina's fortune depended, she gave up all thought of quitting Park Place.

Matthew who came down to attend the funeral, now saw his uncle for the first time, and they were mutually pleased with each other. On the evening after the will had been read, Hannah and Rosina accompanied their brother in a walk through the grounds. They were all very serious.

"How strange!" exclaimed Matthew stopping

short. "To think, now, of our being here! And of my aunt's death, and the unexpected way in which things are brought about! Our prospects in life entirely changed in the course of a fortnight!—My mother restored to the home of her childhood; Harry and myself provided with enough to settle us in business; and *you*, Rosy, an heiress!"

"I cannot bear to think," said Rosina, "of my being so much richer than all of you. Poor aunt Parkinson! she certainly must have loved me much more dearly than I ever supposed; but I cannot be pleased with the difference she has made between us. The youngest, too! and the very one who caused a breach between the two families!—I wish I were of age now, that—— But it will make no difference. We shall be just the same as ever."

"Don't fancy that, Rosy," said Matthew. "It will make no difference in one respect, that of our affection for each other; but you will not be just the same as ever."

"What can you suppose—"

"Not that you will give yourself airs, and plume yourself on having more than any of us. No, Rosy; but in spite of your integrity and goodness of heart, there will be a change.—Mind, I do not say that it will necessarily be a change

for the worse, but nevertheless, you will and must alter. Instead of being merely the youngest of a family brought up in indigence, and grateful for the good-natured notice of others who though neither better born nor better educated than ourselves, are better off, and *might* lord it over us if they chose, you will now be the person of most consequence in Park Place; you will be my uncle's favourite; the servants will look up to you, visitors will flatter you, and my mother will have less control over you."

"Yet I am persuaded," said Hannah warmly, that Rosina will not change."

"Then," pursued Matthew, "you will have scores of admirers—"

"I hope not," cried Rosina. "They will not be worth having, if their admiration is only awakened by my legacy."

"But without their necessarily being mercenary," continued Matthew, "you will now be more put in the way of being seen and talked about and thought about. I don't say that to see you is to admire you, but no one can be admired without being seen. All this will naturally please you—"

"I am very glad," said Rosina, "that my prospects changed no earlier. A twelvemonth ago, I really do believe, Matthew, that a fortune would

have done me all the harm which you think it *will* do. I was very inexperienced, you know, and very young, and rather—vain, and so on, but I am very different now—"

"Are you?" said Matthew, smiling.

"Am I not, Hannah? You know, and mamma knows, and Mr. Russell knows, that I am not so giddy as I used to be. I know it myself. I am very much altered indeed."

"You look very pretty in black," said Matthew.

"Nonsense. Now do believe, Matthew, that I am altered!"

"Are you conscious of having been so very disagreeable before?"

"Disagreeable or not, I know I used to be very silly."

"Especially about last August, when Lewis Pennington was staying at the vicarage. I thought that you were then very silly indeed."

"Last August was very pleasant, take it all together," observed Rosina. "I wonder if we shall ever have as pleasant a summer again."

"However pleasant a summer you may have here, depend upon it, you will always be fond of looking back to old times at Summerfield, and the further you get from thence, the fonder you will be of recalling them."

Here they all three sat down on a garden seat; and Hannah asked her sister if she remembered some pretty lines of Joanna Baillie's, which run thus:

"At lowest ebb, man's thoughts are oft elated;
He knows not that the present ill
Of human fortune, and the struggle
Maintained with fate, does by the skill
Of some concealed and happy juggle
Become itself the good which yet seems distant far.
Thus, when our lamp of fortune burns
With brightest ray, our mind returns
A recollection fondly bent
On those, our happiest hours, in humble dwelling spent."

Rosina admired them very much. She began to talk of how much good she might now do in Summerfield if she were not obliged to live at Park Place; and Matthew began to weigh the advantages of buying a business in comparison with setting up in partnership with Mr. Good. In two months he would be of age. Hannah was urgent with him to prefer the latter plan; and, discussing their future views in life, the young people walked back to the house, very happy in themselves and each other, and almost forgetful that any were less so till they came in sight of their aunt's hatchment.

Matthew returned to town the following morning. Mrs. Wellford's spirits had been much broken by the death of her sister and the various associa-

tions which her early home awakened; and on this day, when Dr. Pennington called on her with his wife and daughter, the meeting with such old friends,—relatives, too, of her husband,—for a few minutes quite overcame her. She was soon able to dry her eyes, and enjoy seeing and hearing them again; while Rosina was talking eagerly to Marianne. Nearly six years had so much altered the young friends in person that they could scarcely recognize one another: Marianne was struck with Rosina's prettiness: she, on the other hand beheld in her old playfellow and correspondent, a good humoured intelligent looking girl, but without any pretensions whatever to beauty, and was secretly disappointed to find her so unlike the picture drawn by her imagination and treacherous remembrance. But *the voice* awoke all old memories and affections; and before they parted, she found that she loved Marianne quite as dearly as ever.

Hannah looked with interest at the father of Lewis Pennington, the friend of her own father and of Mr. Russell. The doctor still deserved the description which Mrs. Parkinson had long ago given of him—"stout and red-faced, with the same high spirits as ever." The latter were indeed curbed on the present occasion, and his florid complexion seemed the result of robust health and

constant exposure to the air, rather than of high living. Mrs. Pennington appeared a woman whom to know must be to love; and Hannah thought Marianne shewed better taste and feeling in constantly living with such parents, than her elder sisters in running the giddy round of fashionable dissipation.

As soon as decorum permitted, all the neighbourhood were eager to pay their respects at Park Place, to see how Mr. Parkinson bore his loss, how Mrs. Wellford's good looks survived time and trial, and how her daughters conducted themselves in their new situation. It was rather a matter of general surprise that Hannah and Rosina were neither shy, vulgar, nor awkward; that they sat in a room much larger and better furnished than they could possibly have been accustomed to, without seeming put out of their way, and rang the bell and spoke to the footman with as much quietness as if they had been used to have bells to ring, and footmen to speak to. It was then remembered that Mrs. Wellford, if unable to have introduced her daughters hitherto into good society, must yet have been competent to teach them the rules of good breeding. Much credit was given her for bringing them up so well; Hannah was pronounced pleasing, and Rosina lovely.

Mrs. Wellford was perplexed and rather mortified at the new names and new faces which seemed to have supplanted almost all those of her old race of favourites. Tylney Park was still the seat of Sir Robert Bosanquet; but it was *young* Sir Robert, the nephew of *old* Sir Robert, her former flame. The Miss Thompsons were married; Miss Turner was dead, and Mrs. Turner paralytic. The Wicksteads had removed into Shropshire, and the Wentworths were living cheap on the continent. Miss Owen, the poor little thing that nobody had thought any thing of, had come into a large fortune, and the Humbys were obliged to retrench! Miss Trotter had *gone off* with an officer, and her father had gone off in a fit. The young Olds had grown up into fine young men and women; and Charles Thoroughgood had absconded with bills of credit to a large amount, thereby plunging his family into distress and disgrace. Such are the vicissitudes of this see-saw world! Those of Mrs. Wellford's acquaintance who were still alive and stationary, had grown from young to middle-aged, and from middle-aged to elderly persons. Among the new inhabitants of Stoke Barton, or those who from children had sprung up into young men and women, were several with whom Hannah and Rosina were pleased. Sir Robert Bosanquet

called to look at the young ladies, and made himself as agreeable as was compatible with a great deal of affectation. The Sewards, who had taken Mr. Wickstead's house, and the Hookes, who had bought the Wentworths' estate, likewise seemed well bred, pleasant people.

Nearly three weeks had now elapsed since Mrs. Parkinson's death, and as Mrs. Wellford had quitted home without making any preparations for so long a stay, it became necessary for her to return and arrange her affairs for leaving Summerfield altogether; a few years of the lease of the cottage yet remaining, she resolved to let it furnished. Hannah was to go with her as assistant and companion, while Rosina remained with her uncle.

Rosina proposed to her sister that before they separated, they should call at the rectory. Hannah had no objection, and as there was nothing to prevent them, they set off to pay the visit at once.

The rectory was a most respectable square stone-built dwelling, with large bow windows, and a flight of wide steps leading to the entrance; a pear-tree was nailed against the wall on one side of the door, and a magnificent Chinese rose tree on the other. In front lay a sloping lawn, and a sweep prettily planted; stables on the right answered to

a green-house on the left, through which might be entered a large old fashioned garden behind, only separated from Park Place by a high wall celebrated for its nectarines.

Hannah and Rosina were shewn into an apartment designated "Mrs. Pennington's room," or "mamma's room," according to the affinity or non-affinity of the speakers—an apartment which Mrs. Parkinson had always detested for being kept in a horrible litter. There were, indeed, generally more books on the tables than on the shelves; an old piano considered good enough for the rising generation to practise upon, had more frequently been seen open than shut, and was always strewn with well used or rather ill used music; the children's heights were pencilled against the wall, and specimens of the children's drawings hung up for ornament, though perhaps they might not be deemed to answer the end. A backboard and a pair of stocks in a corner, hinted of a little of the old *regime;* portfolios that were meant to hold much, and were *made* to hold much more, leant against the wall, gaping from evident repletion. A large terrestrial globe had been dragged, on its cumbrous stand, to the open window; and here, Hannah and Rosina found Mademoiselle Mackau satisfying some geographical inquiry with her two sole remaining pupils. George, a fine

boy of twelve, had usually more occupation in his father's study than in " mamma's room;" his sister Clara, about two years older, was the pride and delight of Mademoiselle, and the pupil of every one in the house, alternately learning Latin of her father, French of her governess, natural history of Marianne, needlework of " dear old Susan," horsemanship of the coachman, sliding in winter and cricketing in summer of George; and of her mother the infinite variety of things which mothers only can teach. Clara was just at the age when girls are either very awkward, or the most pleasing creatures in the world: luckily she was the latter.

As to Mademoiselle Mackau, she was universally allowed to be a most charming personage. She was about forty years of age, but looked at least ten years younger, which might be attributable to a certain national mobility of countenance and sprightliness of manner, a very excellent taste in dress, a pair of bright black eyes, and teeth of admirable regularity and whiteness. Her voice was exceedingly musical; her English amusingly incorrect, as she made it a point of conscience to speak French to her pupils, and had a sly consciousness that her foreign idiom had something *piquant* in it. She was the daughter of a talented but very imprudent *savant*, who had died,

leaving her in indigence among strangers. The Penningtons, who had known and esteemed Monsieur Mackau, offered his daughter a situation in their family as governess, which she accepted with gratitude. Never had a mother a more able coadjutor. Mademoiselle's brilliant talents were equalled by the goodness of her heart. In times of sickness or danger, her promptitude, presence of mind, and unwearied activity were beyond praise. In daily intercourse, her varied information and quickness at repartee made her an enchanting companion. The girls almost quarrelled which should have her when they married, but Mademoiselle set that question at rest by saying that she should never leave the rectory, unless the doctor turned her out of doors. She loved all her pupils, but her greatest favourite was Lewis, who, like a king, could do no wrong. Mademoiselle Mackau had not escaped two or three offers of marriage, but, strange to say, she preferred dependence and a single life.

Mademoiselle was delighted to receive the Miss Wellfords. "Que vous êtes prodigieusement grandie," exclaimed she, looking at Rosina with admiration, "I could scarcely believe my eyes, yesterday, when I saw you at church."

"I did not see you, Mademoiselle," replied Rosina, for I was taken up with looking at the foot-

man who followed Mrs. Pennington with an umbrella under one arm, and the fourteen prayer books and Bibles under the other, which he so unluckily let fall down."

Mademoiselle laughed. "*Voyez*," said she, "I am making him von little bag, vhich shall prevent him such an accident again."

"It almost made papa laugh," said George.

"For shame," said Clara, much scandalized at the idea of her father's laughing, or being supposed to laugh in the pulpit.

Mrs. Pennington here entered, and was soon followed by the doctor, who seemed in a little perturbation. "Ah, Rosina, how do you do? Good morning, Miss Wellford," said he. "It is fortunate I have fallen in with two wise young ladies, since your pleasant looks may help to put me in good humour. I have been scolding that incorrigible bird-nester, Joe Paine. Pray does the churchwarden of Summerfield offer fourpence a dozen for tom-tits' heads?"

Hannah laughed, and said "she believed not."

"Well, I hope you are right, for it is a very immoral practice. Here, the poor little wretches are reckoned among vermin, and a reward has accordingly been held out for their extirpation, time immemorial. This is one of the precious customs

of our ancestors, about whom so much fuss is made, and who, in my private opinion, were not half so good as ourselves. Joe Paine is one of the principal actors in the massacre of the innocents, for such it may truly be called, and fell in with me just now with two shillingsworth of their harmless scalps in his hat!"

"Dat Joe Paine has a bad countenance," observed Mademoiselle.

"And a worse heart, I am afraid," said the doctor, "however, I rated him soundly. Where is Marianne?"

"She is just running up the garden, papa," said Clara, from the window.

"Pray, Miss Wellford, when is your visit to Summerfield to take place?"

"We think of travelling, sir, the day after to-morrow."

"Do you regret the exchange of Summerfield for Stoke Barton?"

"Yes, I certainly do. I cannot easily transplant my affections from one place to another. Summerfield is much the prettiest, it stands in a hilly country, whereas this is rather flat. Besides, we must henceforth be a divided family. Harry is at Heeley, and Matthew will, most likely, settle in Summerfield."

"That is a real misfortune, certainly," said

Mrs. Pennington. "You should persuade your brother to settle here."

"It would not do for him, my dear," said Dr. Pennington, "we are overstocked with physicians and apothecaries already, and a young man like Mr. Wellford would find it up hill work for many years to come. Poor Seabright starves on his practice."

Here Marianne ran in, looking the picture of health and animation. As soon as she had shaken hands with Hannah and Rosina, and expressed her pleasure at seeing them, "Papa," cried she, "only look at this lovely fungus, which I found as I came along—"

"*Agaric*, my dear," said the doctor.

"Agaric, then, papa. What is it?"

"Let me see, let me see," said he, taking it gently, "Oh, this is agaricus odorus—the odorous agaric—do not you perceive its fragrant smell?"

"Its 'odious savours sweet,' as Pyramus says," cried Marianne, laughing. "Like heliotrope, is it not? My fingers are scented with it. It is a perfect nosegay."

"More like bitter almonds, than heliotrope, I think, Marianne. Where did you find it? Under the beech trees?"

"Yes, papa, among the old leaves."

"I thought so; put it aside, my dear,—we will

compare it by and by with those which I put yesterday into the museum."

"The museum!" repeated Hannah, with surprise. "Have you a museum here?"

"Oh yes, a very famous one," said Marianne. "Should you like to see it?"

"Very much."

"I shall consider it highly honoured by your presence. Follow me; and if you are fond of natural history, I think I can shew you some specimens that will please you very much. Papa piques himself on his geological specimens, but my chief pride is in lichens. You cannot think how fond we are of our museum. What have I done with the key, I wonder?" continued she, as they stopped before a door. "We are too jealous of our treasures you see, not to keep them locked up. Oh, here it is—come in."

"Is *this* the museum?" said Hannah, with a little disappointment, as she found herself in a low, odd shaped room, with a few deal shelves against the walls, on which were ranged some paper and pasteboard boxes, an old table covered with shabby looking plants, mosses, and seeds, in most admired disorder, and a heap of stones in one corner of the floor, which seemed about to be Macadamized.

"You look disappointed," said Marianne, laughing. "Did you expect it to be as large as the

British Museum? Every thing, you know, is of our own collecting, with the exception of some butterflies and fossils which papa bought at a sale. Real, genuine naturalists are not mere collectors; the *world* is their museum."

"That is right, Marianne," said Rosina. "Stand up for the dignity of your study."

"Undoubtedly I will—I have had a mania for natural history ever since I used to read the Travels of Rolando. That Montval was such a delightful character! I am child enough to love him to this day. What pursuit can be more rational and entertaining than inquiring into the works of nature? It is such a source of never failing interest! Sir Robert Bosanquet says in his yawning, half-awake way, 'I wonder how ladies contrive to support existence in the country.' I tell him that the amusements of the country are infinitely more various and inexhaustible than those of town. Botany, mineralogy, conchology,—these are enough to fill a life time. Besides, who ever grows tired of gardening, working, or reading? But really, Hannah, there are some rather curious things here. Look at this hortus siccus. These shells, again, are very fine. Among these stones are some petrifactions which we concluded to be antediluvian. See how curiously the impression of a cluster of shells is marked on this fragment,

though the shells no longer exist. Here, again, is a petrified animal, name uncertain, which may have gambolled about in the days of Noah—the head and legs unfortunately are lost; and *this*," said she with a laugh, "we consider a petrified slug!"

Marianne had so much to tell of her various curiosities, that some time elapsed before they returned to Mrs. Pennington's room. The doctor had in the mean time gone out; and after sitting a little while with Mrs. Pennington, the girls took leave.

On the following morning, Hannah received a letter from Mr. Russell.

CHAPTER XII.

A LOVER'S ANXIETIES.

"Poor Mr. Russell!"—With as much anxiety and impatience as had ever agitated the bosom of a lover at a moment when a single word was to be the fiat of his felicity or despair, he had conscientiously forborne to avail himself of the quibble that might have been made on the words "a day or two," and manfully endured the term of suspense which he hoped would enable Hannah to make up her mind. Had he been in the habit of encouraging Mary White to retail the news of the day, or had he called on Mrs. Good or Mr. Greenway, so important a fact as the Wellfords having been sent for from Park Place could not have failed of reaching his ears; but his thoughts were so much engrossed by one thrilling subject, that he shunned all society while his fate was pending, and shut himself up in his study, *intentionally* to abstract his mind by reading; but actually, to sit with a book before him while he recalled again and again every syllable

Hannah had uttered. Never was man more completely the prey of alternate hope and despondency. At one moment, he persuaded himself that Hannah would never have tampered with his feelings by appearing to waver, unless her heart were secretly engaged in his favour; the next, he wondered at his own absurdity in supposing that she would accept him. At length, when the second day of his self-appointed exile arrived, he resolved to torture himself no longer, and hastily walked down to the White Cottage.

"The ladies are gone, sir," said Betty, sorrowfully, as she opened the door.

"Gone out, are they?" said Mr. Russell with disappointment. "Are you sure that Miss Wellford is not at home?"

"Oh, sir they're *all gone*, I tell you! Gone for good! At least, for no good either, I suppose I should say, for mistress's sister is lying for dead."

Mr. Russell was thunderstruck. "Gone?" repeated he, hardly able to convince himself of the reality. "When and how did they go? When are they to return?"

"Indeed, sir, I can't say. They went yesterday, about one o'clock, in a travelling carriage mistress's sister sent for them, with two men-servants and all in as great style as ever I see. Mistress could not tell for certain when she might

come back, because that might depend upon how long her sister might take in dying."

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Mr. Russell. "Are you sure there was no letter or message left for me?"

"Dear me! yes, sir, so there was, I recollect. Miss Hannah gave me a little note for you—What did I do with it, I wonder? I put it down somewhere, and never thought of it from that time to this."

Running off as she spoke, Betty commenced a vigorous search, which from the length of its duration, seemed likely to be unsuccessful. Mr. Russell, impatient and provoked, followed her into the parlour, looked on the chimney-piece and under the sofa cushions, but alas! nothing was to be found but a butcher's bill and a newspaper cover. The room was set to rights, and drearily destitute of litter. Meanwhile, Betty, bustling off to her own particular domains, found the important tri-cornered note in her work-box, the gift of Master Harry, wherein she now clearly remembered depositing it. Mr. Russell seized it eagerly, and without attending to a word of her apologies and self-felicitations, walked off into the garden and tore it open. It contained merely a statement of the occasion of their sudden departure, and an apology for the haste in which it

was written, adding a hope that their absence from Summerfield would not be of long duration. Mr. Russell sighed, and read the note again and again. It was the first he had ever received from Hannah; and unsatisfactory as it was, there was some pleasure in gazing on her writing, and feeling that it was addressed to himself. He fancied that she had been puzzled how to begin it. The word "dear" had been carefully erased, and the note abruptly opened with, "You will be concerned to hear the cause of our sudden departure." It afforded subject for speculation whether she had been on the point of writing "dear sir," or "dear Mr. Russell." The former was horrible; fit only for a grandfather or uncle: the latter, as circumstances stood between them, more familiar than Hannah was likely to have contemplated. It might even have been designed for "dear Matthew," or "dear Harry," on some former occasion; and only have been now erased because no other sheet of paper happened to be at hand. There was something very mysterious in "I remain, &c., &c., Hannah Wellford." *I remain et cetera, et cetera?* What did that imply? *Yours, &c.*, would have been infinitely better worth reading—'I remain Hannah Wellford' had a shade of consolation in it; but would she *always* remain Hannah Wellford? These little speculations di-

verted Mr. Russell's thoughts for a few minutes as he walked home, but they soon reverted to their former anxious channel. He could not, with propriety, write to Hannah or expect an answer from her at such a time as this; and was forced to content himself with inquiring daily of Betty, whether she had heard from her mistress or the young ladies. The answer was constantly in the negative; Mr. Russell then noticed Mrs. Parkinson's death in the papers, and justly concluded that the Wellfords would not return till after the funeral. He continued his diurnal inquiries, however, at the cottage; and one day Betty burst upon him with the news,

"Oh sir! mistress is coming back to settle her affairs, and they are all going to live at Park Place!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Russell, turning very pale. All his dreams of happiness seemed shaken to the ground in an instant.

"Here is the letter," continued Betty, searching her heavy pocket. "Mistress and Miss Hannah are coming back in the course of a week."

"What do you say? Miss Hannah coming back?" cried he, scarcely knowing where he stood. He took the crumpled letter which Betty was unfolding for him, and read the following

lines which Hannah had prudently written in large distinct characters.

"It is settled, Betty, that we are to remain in future at Park Place, but my mother will come home to make what arrangements are necessary towards the end of the week, therefore be so good as to have every thing in readiness for her. I shall return with her, but Miss Rosina will remain here."

Mr. Russell walked home in rather an agitated frame of mind. It was comforting to know that Hannah would soon return; but the possibility of a refusal, and the certainty that the family were to quit Summerfield, were not to be thought of with composure. "Scene of my happiest hours!" thought he, as he paused at his own gate and looked down the hill on the blue smoke ascending from the rose-covered cottage, "what will you be to me when they are gone?"

He could no longer deny himself the relief of pouring out all his feeling on paper; and with a very full heart wrote to Hannah, entreating her to keep him no longer in suspense, and conjuring her to accept and return his affection. When his letter was sealed and sent, he felt more at ease than he had done for some time; but it was certainly a weary three weeks which elapsed between

the Wellfords' departure and return. There was just a chance that Hannah might answer the letter before she left Park Place. Mr. Russell hoped she would, but dreaded that she would not. She did not; and he could only sigh when his foot-boy returned empty handed from the post-office, and weigh the chances between Friday and Saturday.

Friday was the day on which Hannah and her mother travelled. As she had only received Mr. Russell's letter on the preceding morning, she did not think it worth while to write, since a few hours would enable her to answer him verbatim. Mr. Russell had often occupied the thoughts both of mother and daughter, but his name had scarcely passed between them since quitting Summerfield. Their journey afforded an opportunity for uninterrupted confidence.

"I hope, my dear Hannah," said Mrs. Wellford, when they had quitted the environs of Stoke Barton, "that you have by this time been able to make up your mind about Mr. Russell."

"I have, mamma," replied Hannah, "I think I now understand my own feelings perfectly."

"And what do they tell you, my love?"

"That—that I could be very happy—"

"As his wife? My dear Hannah! I am rejoiced to hear it. But are you *quite* sure of your own heart? Quite sure that you will not only be

happy as his wife, but happier than in any other circumstances?"

"Yes, mother," said Hannah, in a low but firm voice, "I am quite sure. I did not know," added she, after a pause, "how I—felt for Mr. Russell till I was separated from him. In London, I missed him continually; I heard no conversation like his, I met no one who appeared to me so agreeable and amiable. But I had, at that time, never connected the idea of our fates together. I regretted him only as a delightful friend to whose society I had been accustomed from childhood, and of which I had not felt the value till I had lost it."

"And now, Hannah,—" said her mother.

"Now," continued Hannah, "I feel very differently. When I returned from London, I was more than ever struck with Mr. Russell's superiority of mind and manner. So easy, so *home-like*, so perfectly gentlemanly! Still, I did not consider him with reference to any nearer connexion between us; and fancied we were to go on for ever in the same daily round of friendly companionship, as we had already done for so many years. When he undeceived me, and I found that I had long been loved by him, I seemed bewildered. I could not disentangle my various feelings; and proud as I felt of the affection of

such a man, I believe I could have refused his proposals without much pain. Now, however, that we have again been separated, while my eyes have been opened to his real sentiments, I feel how painful, how almost impossible it would be for me voluntarily to lose his friendship,—his love."

"I am satisfied, Hannah!" cried Mrs. Wellford, warmly. "You can appreciate this excellent man, and repay his affection with the attachment it deserves."

"But oh! mother,—you will leave Summerfield,—how can we ever part?"

"Come, come, you must not let that thought distress you. I shall always, at heart, consider Summerfield my home, and visit it as often as I can. You will not be torn away from your dear accustomed haunts or your early friends. Your brothers will settle near you, and Rosina stay with you as often and as long as you like. When inclined to grow low-spirited, remember that to see you united to Mr. Russell has long been the fondest wish of my heart. Besides, instead of being your neighbour, I shall be your guest!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS.

THEY had scarcely been home a quarter of an hour when Betty announced Mr. Russell. His hurried, half fearful glance at Hannah's countenance as their eyes met, was answered by a blush, a smile so soft that he felt almost dizzy with transport, for he was sure that they could betoken no chilling refusal. Mr. Russell could scarcely conduct himself like a rational being; he listened, or attempted to listen to Mrs. Wellford, without understanding a word she said; and expressed sympathy, sorrow, and satisfaction in a manner so *mal-à-propos*, that she presently left the room to give him an opportunity of making himself more intelligible, if possible, to her daughter.

"Hannah!" cried Mr. Russell, as soon as the door had closed. There was always something inexpressibly soft and musical in his pronunciation of that name. He loved to dwell on it with the lingering emphasis of Italian. What he said, or how he said it, is not much to the purpose, but

the next half hour was rather happy than otherwise. It likewise passed with incredible swiftness, for when Betty brought in the tea-things, Mr. Russell was certain it could not be near tea-time, and accounted for the orders which Betty seemed to have received, by supposing that Mrs. Wellford wanted some refreshment after her journey. When she came in, he started up, and seizing her hand, claimed from her a mother's congratulations. Mrs. Wellford's eyes glistened, but not with painful tears; and the little party placed themselves at the tea-table with very enviable feelings. Mr. Russell could now express in comprehensible language his concern for the occasion of Mrs. Wellford's abrupt summons to Park Place, and listen with feeling to her account of what had passed during his absence. He was more touched, indeed, by the mention of Mrs. Parkinson's sufferings, than it is probable he could have been, if he had known more of her character; and much as he regretted the necessity of Mrs. Wellford's leaving Summerfield, he no longer viewed that calamity as a subject of despair. He heard of the distinction which had been made between the sisters with perfect composure. Mercenary advantages, never much considered by him, seemed at this moment, when the cherished object of his heart was just secured, of less concern than ever.

The evening flew away on noiseless wings; and when Mr. Russell at length quitted the White Cottage, he was almost thankful to find himself alone, that he might convince himself he really was awake and in his senses. How brightly shone the moon as he returned! How distinctly gleamed the White Cottage as he paused to look down on it from the hill, and thought on the treasure it contained! He went to bed, but found, that, for this night, Hannah had murdered sleep. If we pursue *her* midnight reveries, we may naturally imagine them equally sweet and unalloyed, though less rapturous in excess; equally satisfied with the present, and charmed with the smiling promise of the future:

> "Till, like a shutting flower, her senses close,
> And on her lies the beauty of repose." *

During Mrs. Wellford's stay at Summerfield, her time was fully occupied in settling her affairs, taking an inventory of furniture and fixtures, packing up clothes and books, giving away sundry articles of household use to her poor neighbours, and looking out for a tenant. The latter was found sooner than might have been expected. A brother of Mrs. Greenway's, a lieutenant in the navy, had just come to England, and wished to

* Robert Montgomery.

secure a furnished residence for the summer and autumn in the neighbourhood of his sister. This was very convenient. Mrs. Wellford did not wish to let the cottage for a long term, because, in the event of Matthew's settling in Summerfield, it might be a desirable home for him. Mrs. Greenway settled the whole affair between the parties: the terms were cheap, the cow, pigs, and poultry were to be taken care of, Betty was to remain, and every thing was arranged comfortably on both sides. Betty had been sadly cut up at the thought of Mrs. Wellford's having no further occasion for her, and was frequently to be seen conveying the corner of her apron to her eyes; but the arrangement that she was to remain in the house, and the hope that Mr. Matthew might hereafter commence housekeeping in it, gave her some consolation; and Mrs. Wellford completed the recovery of her spirits by telling her as a great secret that it was probable Miss Hannah and Mr. Russell would be married to one another before the summer was out. Betty's face beamed with delight, though she said she was not much surprised, for Mr. Russell's calling every day to enquire had made her think there was something *in it*. This secret was not long in travelling to the shop, where it was communicated to the housemaids of Lady Worral, Mrs. Good, and Mrs. Greenway, who of course

carried it to their mistresses. The only person offended at the medium of communication was Lady Worral, who felt much hurt that Hannah, who had called on her in the morning, should have left such an interesting fact to be brought her by the servants. She would not condescend to display any surprise at Sally's information, drily answering her with "Well, what of that? Who is surprised? Where's the mighty news?" In the course of the morning, however, she sent to tell Hannah that she wanted to speak to her.

"So, Hannah!" said her ladyship, as soon as she entered, "you are come, are you? Take your work down stairs, Sally," said she, looking over her shoulder towards her maid, who had hoped to remain unnoticed and forgotten in the dressing-room window. "Go down, I say, and take your thimble and scissors and all your things with you, that you need not be fidgeting in and out all the while Miss Wellford is with me. Shut the door after you. So, Hannah," recommenced her ladyship as soon as Sally was fairly out of hearing, "you don't treat me with confidence, I find, after all that I have done for you."

"Madam—?" said Hannah, colouring with a presentiment of what was to follow.

"No, Hannah, I must say I don't think I have deserved this of you. I, who have been a grand-

mother, as I may say, to every one of you. Your aunt Parkinson, with all her money, was but a poor friend to your family, compared with what I have been. She hated and scorned you all her life, and only left you a few thousand pounds when she could make no use of them herself. Whereas *I* have taken your mother by the hand ever since she came to Summerfield, a poor ignorant young creature, abandoned by her friends, without experience or management—always ready with assistance, always ready with advice—nothing could equal the gratitude of your poor father; and since his death, I am sure I have regarded his children as sons and daughters—"

"Indeed, ma'am, we can never repay your kindness."

"Yes, child, you *might*, by confidence. Why do you leave me to hear what most nearly concerns you, through the idle gossips at the shop?"

"The shop!" exclaimed Hannah in alarm.

"Oh ay!" replied Lady Worral, maliciously smiling. "There is nothing talked of there but that you are to be married to Mr. Russell. But is it true?"

Hannah acknowledged that it was.

"Then I must say I am rejoiced to hear it," cried Lady Worral. Rising from her chair with a little difficulty, she bestowed on Hannah a hearty

kiss. Hannah was much affected by this demonstration of tenderness.

"You were right, ma'am," said she, "you had reason to be displeased with us; but I could not summon up courage to tell you, and thought it would come better from my mother than myself."

"So it might have done, but your mother, I suppose, has been too busy to come to me; and I must say I was vexed to hear it as I did. But nothing else vexes me—it is blessed news, Hannah! Mr. Russell deserves you; and I would not say as much for any other man in the world. As for Arthur Huntley—pshaw! You would never have done together. I always thought your mother acted very foolishly in encouraging him; very foolishly indeed. You may remember I told you my mind about it, one day, at the time. You did not take it kindly of me then, but you see I was right, now. So long as I thought he was paying his addresses to Rosina, I had nothing to say; though indeed, Lewis Pennington would have been a much more proper match for her; and now, it's very lucky it never came to any thing; for what should Arthur Huntley do with a girl with ten thousand pounds? If he had gone into the army, indeed, as his father and grandfather had done before him, instead of disgracing his family, there might have been something to say

for him; but she will do much better for herself now; and I dare say, having got among the Penningtons again, will marry Lewis after all. Well, Hannah, this is good news. Your poor mother, I dare say, is ready to jump for joy. It must have been the wish of her heart as well as of mine. I often thought how it would end; and when Mrs. Good said she feared nothing would come of it, over and over again have I said to her, 'Do but have patience; let them take their own time—we shall see—we shall see.'—You *have* taken your own time, it must be confessed—ha, ha, ha!—however, the wedding would have been a twelvemonth sooner if Mr. Huntley had not come in the way, and most haste is sometimes worst speed. Those that are long making up their minds, are not likely to change them. The vicarage will again be to me what it was in your poor father's time; and let me tell you that your prospects of comfort there, are far superior to what your mother's were. The house is in exceeding good repair and well furnished; you will marry with the approbation of your family, and settle among your old friends. You will come and sit with me and make up my whist table, and be all to me that your mother was. And—and I'll be all to you that I was to her!—Not quite, though, for I am growing stiff and feeble, and can't walk

in and out of the village as well as formerly. But, Hannah, I'll tell you what I am thinking of. It is a long way round by the carriage road, but I'll have a little gate made in the park-paling, just opposite the vicarage. That will make a nice short cut, and be very handy for both of us. Yes, I will speak to Collins about making a little gate. And another thing: I shall give you your wedding gown; and likewise a pair of silver candlesticks."

When Hannah was able to terminate her visit, she walked home quietly, for she expected Mr. Russell to be waiting for her. Mrs. Wellford insisted on all the packing up, &c., being left to herself and Betty; and while they were thus occupied, separating new things from old, and debating on what might be taken, what left, and what given away, Hannah was wandering with her lover through the pleasant lanes and meadows of Summerfield. Her soft countenance again wore the smile of timid happiness which it had so often given poor Mr. Russell the heart-ache to witness during the preceding autumn; and he himself, now assured that their hearts and interests were inseparable, displayed an exhilaration of look and tone very different from his former quiet composure. Sometimes, indeed, his happiness took an appearance of deep seriousness; and this was

when he considered the instability of all earthly possessions, and the value of the treasure which Providence, for wise and inscrutable ends, might even now snatch from him; or when he enhanced present thankfulness by reflecting on past sufferings. It was in one of these moods that he gave Hannah a fuller history of the rise and progress of his affection for her than he had done hitherto. "When I first came to Summerfield," said he, "I was too poor to marry; nor had I ever met with any one particularly possessed of the qualities and graces capable of attracting me. Books made my little world; and I had sketched out a plan of scholar-like, bachelor retirement which I now think had rather a tendency to indolence and selfishness. However, I still sought for relaxation in society; but though we certainly live in as honest-hearted and guileless a neighbourhood as can easily be found, I had few whom I fancied congenial associates. Your mother seemed to me to combine the most cultivated intellect with the greatest delicacy of feeling, of any one in Summerfield; and I took pleasure in seeing you, as a very young girl, improve in the same graces of heart and understanding. I began to take interest in assisting the developement of your mind, and became attached to my pupil.

I loved to watch the silent intelligence of your countenance while we were discussing books, characters, and feelings, and to see your eyes brighten whenever we met. Yes, Hannah," continued he laughing, "at fourteen, it was certainly you who courted me. I recollect your tone of disappointment in once saying, 'You did not come, yesterday.' Still, it was long before the sentiment, and still longer before the suspicion, of love entered my mind: I saw you daily growing in beauty and intellect, without fathoming the depth of my interest in you. When, at length, the conviction struck me that I loved you, I was startled at the difference between us in age, and the improbability that you would ever feel any warmer sentiment for me than respect. Yet the field was open before me; I had no competitors: you seemed to take increasing pleasure in my society, and I became bold enough to think that at some future time, you might be mine. Still I delayed displaying any warmth of manner, dreading a repulse, and the probable loss of our daily unrestrained and delightful intercourse. As you grew older, I trusted that your views of domestic happiness would become more sober and more likely to be answered by my fervent attachment. Thus I let time slip by; and then came

Huntley to banish the tranquillity of both. Certainly it was uncommonly foolish and imprudent of me to introduce him to you; but I thought of him only as the amusement of the moment; and who could have foretold his settling himself in the neighbourhood? I certainly was aware of his admiration of your countenance from the first, but little supposed it to be more than an artist's momentary enthusiasm. My heart first misgave me when I found him introduced at Lady Worral's. Do you remember that evening?"

"Perfectly," said Hannah, "and your expressing regret to me that you had introduced Mr. Huntley to us without having sufficiently ascertained his character."

"Yes," said Mr. Russell, "and I remember your ingenuous answer—'There is no fear of Rosina.' *That* convinced me that there was no fear of *yourself*. You were undazzled by his shining talents; and I was not answerable for the consequences of his admiration on himself. However, I was sufficiently punished, even before you learnt to feel interest in him. Rosina was captivated by his fascinating manners, and the consequence was the ruin of poor Lewis's happiness. I was sincerely sorry for it: however, as I believed Huntley really attached to your sister, I threw no blame on him. But Lewis, with greater penetra-

tion, ascertained that his attachment was to *you*, and warned me of a rival. I was blind to the truth, and continued so for some time; but when at length it flashed on me,—oh Hannah! how bitter were my feelings! However, I had self-denial enough to abstain from interference, till I became convinced that Huntley was unworthy of you. Then, at length, I spoke, at the risk of making you hate me; which I believe, Hannah, you did, cordially, for the time."

"That is much too strong a word," said Hannah with a smile.

"Like most young ladies," continued Mr. Russell, "you chose to take your own way. Then came that poor young man's illness; and then, as I sat beside his bed and heard his frequent utterance of your name, my heart became oppressed with compassion, and I resolved to make him, if possible, worthy of you. But that was no easy task. He had a thorough distaste for serious argument or reflection, and his illness did not seem to have made his heart much more susceptible of religious feeling. There was little or no gratitude to heaven for his recovery; his only thought was how soon he should see you. What took place afterwards, you only know. I must own that when I found Huntley was preparing to quit Summerfield, a ray of hope darted

across my mind. But that was quickly dissipated by your unyielding dejection; and I acquired the painful belief that your mind would never sufficiently recover to admit a second attachment. Time at length seemed to restore your tranquillity, but just as I was beginning to hail your improved health and spirits, you accompanied Lady Worral to town, and I was convinced that by some means or other, your intimacy with Huntley would be renewed."

"You were a very ingenious self-tormentor," said Hannah.

"Should I be a lover if I were not?" said Mr. Russell. "However, Hannah, now that I have your own word to rely on, I bid eternal farewell to jealousy, and yield myself to

> "Such a sacred and home-felt delight,
> Such sober certainty of waking bliss,"

as I never felt till now. Can I use the word *sober* yet, with propriety, do you think?" added he, laughing.

Ten days quickly passed. At the end of that time, Mrs. Wellford's final arrangements were made; and as the lieutenant and his family were eager to take possession of the White Cottage, she now proposed returning to Park Place. Many regrets were expressed and some tears, not con-

jured up for stage effect, were shed, when she paid farewell visits to the cottagers who had for so many years shared her sympathy and enjoyed her unostentatious bounty. It was a matter of great consolation, however, to hear that Miss Hannah would in a few months return to Summerfield *for good;* and Henry Neale's pale face flushed with delight when he heard that she was *indeed* to be married to Mr. Russell. Much cordial regret and affection was likewise expressed in a higher circle. Lady Worral declared that nothing could make up to her for the loss of Mrs. Wellford but the certainty that her dear daughter would soon supply her place: the Goods, Greenways, and Hollands parted from her with equal concern. Matthew having now fully satisfied himself that he wished to enter into partnership with Mr. Good, had authorized his mother to sound his inclinations; and as Mr. Good's business was now really more than he could well attend to himself, he was very glad to accept the liberal proposals made by the young pupil, of whom he had always thought highly.

Betty held up bravely to the last, till the travellers fairly drove off: she then burst into a hearty fit of tears, which were only checked by Mr. Russell's inviting her to drink tea with Mary White at the vicarage. He himself was rather

low-spirited at the parting, though he had resolved to follow Hannah as soon as he could prevail on a friend to do his duty at Summerfield for a Sunday or two. He could not, however, reflect on all that had passed within the last fortnight, and yet be desponding or ungrateful.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EVENING AT THE RECTORY.

Mr. Parkinson was beginning to recover his spirits "as well as could be expected;"—that is to say, he daily read the papers, talked to his bailiff, walked or rode about his estate, now and then hummed a little tune as he changed his boots for his slippers, took his regular nap after dinner, and played backgammon in the evening. He still assumed a grave, thoughtful face when he spoke of "poor Mrs. Parkinson," and heaved a deep sigh. The feeling phrase "poor Mrs. Parkinson" was continued to his dying day; but he gradually abandoned the sigh.

Mr. Parkinson was not, indeed, one of those beings who can stand alone in the world. He wanted a companion, to talk to him, to enliven him, even to scold him, if nothing better was to be had; and as he had grown used to his wife's peevish temper, he would really have derived much inconvenience from her loss, had it not been so excellently supplied by the family of her sister.

Whether Mrs. Parkinson would have been benevolent enough to have provided so well for her husband's comforts, if she could have foreseen how far his heart would be from breaking, is irrelevant to the purpose. Certain it is that there had never seemed a greater chance of his enjoying perfect happiness. Rosina was admirably adapted to fill the vacant place in his heart. Her voice, remarkably sweet, could always convey each syllable of its utterance to his ear, in spite of his deafness; while the lower tones of her mother and sister sometimes escaped him. Her liveliness kept his mind awake and amused; her sweet temper and attention to his wishes and comforts had the additional charm of novelty to recommend them. She learned to play backgammon on purpose to please him, accompanied him in his walks, entered with interest into his farming concerns, collected the news of the village for his amusement, and sang and played sprightly airs while he indulged in "indolent vacuity of thought." Her society becoming daily more indispensable to him, her uncle began to consider whether there were any occasion for his being deprived of it during his morning rides; and at length actually bought a very pretty lady's horse for her express use. Rosina was delighted with this new acquisition; and as

she had little fear, she soon became a good horse-woman.

In the meantime, Mrs. Wellford and Hannah had returned from Summerfield. Rosina was rejoiced to hear that Mr. Russell was accepted; and longed for the period of his arrival at Stoke Barton. Mr. Parkinson was duly informed by Mrs. Wellford of her daughter's engagement, and seemed a little startled by it, but expressed sincere pleasure, and begged that Mr. Russell might be invited to Park Place. Of course, the lovers corresponded; and Mr. Russell could be even more eloquent on paper than in speech; but Hannah's letters, calm and temperate like her usual self, only half satisfied him. Hannah had not, like Rosina, the art of *painting* every feeling of the moment, nor the girlish inconsideration which laid her heart completely open to view. She timidly considered and re-considered her expressions, fearful of saying too much, till they lost the glow and fluency which would have been imparted by the pen of a ready writer. Mr. Russell felt, and yet was vexed with himself for feeling discontented with the even-toned, neatly expressed, beautifully written answers to his impassioned letters; he was even almost angry with Hannah for mending her pens so carefully, and erasing any ill-chosen word

with her penknife, instead of hastily drawing a line through it. However, he only became the more anxious to terminate their correspondence by procuring a supply for his absence as soon as possible, that he might be able to read again on her countenance, the expression of deep happiness which she could not trust herself to speak: and in less than three weeks after their separation, he gladly wrote to tell her that Dr. Black's younger brother, who had just taken orders, would perform duty for him, the two Sundays after the next, which would enable him to start for Stoke Barton on Monday, and remain there nearly three weeks. He added, that having borrowed a horse, he meant to make use of it on his journey, which would be infinitely pleasanter than travelling in the stage.

"Hannah seems quite satisfied with the arrangement," said Rosina, laughing, when she had related it to her mother.

"And pray, what may be your objection to it?" inquired Mrs. Wellford.

"Oh mamma! Mr. Russell is one of the best creatures in the world; but only think of a lover voluntarily travelling twice as slowly as necessary! He ought to wish to fly 'swift as the sparkle of a glancing star!'"

"You are too hard on him, Rosina. He will be very little longer on the road, and will have an opportunity of admiring the beauty of the country."

"Yes, I dare say that is what he promises himself! If he were *my* lover, I hope he would think only of the earliest opportunity of admiring me! I can fancy I see the dear good man drawing up his horse on the brow of some hill to enjoy the prospect, or inhale, as he says, the luxury of unexpected sweets; quite forgetful that Hannah is mean while enduring all the torments of expectation, till at length, after musing in a kind of dream for about half an hour, during which time he has made a thousand speculations about the weather, the soil, and the crops, he is reminded that we may be waiting dinner for him by the consciousness that he is—very hungry!"

"And a very natural consequence of a forty miles' ride. Pray, does Hannah favour you with a sight of his letters?"

"No, indeed, though I long to know what hand he makes at a love-letter,—whether he gives extracts from his own sermons, or criticizes new publications, or tells her Mr. Holland's opinion of the season."

"Then, since you are *not* admitted to a parti-

cipation of his communications, allow me to hint that you will find Mr. Russell a very different lover from what you suppose him."

"Oh, mamma, this affair of the journey shews that he is exactly the same as ever!"

"But he wishes to bring his horse."

"He might have sent that."

"At any rate, Rosina," said Mrs. Wellford, laughing, "you must allow that a lover is more at liberty to pursue his refined cogitations, riding at will, through solitary lanes and by-paths, than stuffed into a six-inside coach with talkative passengers and perhaps a crying child."

"Yes, mamma, you have now made the best excuse for him which the case allows; so we will indulge in the pleasing hope that you have guessed his real reason for travelling on horseback, till we are forced to abandon it for some less romantic conviction."

Dr. and Mrs. Pennington were much pleased to hear of the intended marriage. Mr. Russell was an old friend and favourite, and they were glad that they should soon have an opportunity of renewing their intimacy with him. Marianne had no very distinct recollection of him, and applied to Rosina for his description.

"He is a person whom it is impossible not to like," said Rosina, "and though not what *I* call

very young, I think he looks no older now than he did when he first came to Summerfield. He is not quite so tall as Lewis, but of a good height notwithstanding; with a very gentlemanly air, though not the least of a dandy in dress or manner; and with dark eyes that seem to smile as they look at you. Then, he is so beloved by the poor, and reads aloud so beautifully! To hear him read some of the denunciations of Ezekiel is quite awful; and then again he will give such expression to some little foolish ballad of Wordsworth's as to draw tears from your eyes. Such a knack he has, too, of seeing into all your little whims and weaknesses! yet no one can be more perfectly good-natured. Lady Byron, you know, said to her husband when she had been noticing his remarkably high spirits, 'And yet, Byron, you are, at heart, the most melancholy of mortals.' Now Mr. Russell is precisely the reverse. To see and hear him, you might often think him quite staid and grave; and yet, at heart he is extremely cheerful. Do you begin to see him?"

"Distinctly," said Marianne.

But when Monday and Tuesday came, Rosina found she had not given the finishing touches to her description. "Oh, my dear Marianne!" cried she, running towards her friend as she met her in the grounds on Tuesday afternoon, "you must

wipe out of your memory all that I told you about Mr. Russell's gravity and composure, or when you see him, you will say I am a bad hand at drawing likenesses. I never knew a man so altered in my life! His face wears a perpetual smile; and I verily believe, if it were not out of respect to his cloth, he would break forth into singing! His eyes, like Gertrude's, 'seem to love whate'er they look upon,' and instead of being wholly and selfishly engrossed with Hannah, he makes himself agreeable to every one in the house. The smile of happiness certainly makes a man look ten years younger than the smile of benevolence. They are now gone out for a ride. Mr. Russell brought a horse with him, and I have once or twice persuaded Hannah to mount my gentle little Ariel. She is rather a timid rider, but Mr. Russell promised to take great care of her, and I don't imagine they will often go out of a walk.—However, if they remain out much longer, I shall begin to fear she has been thrown. Hark! do not I hear the sound of horses' feet? Yes, here they come, and Hannah is actually cantering!"

Marianne had come to invite the whole family to drink tea in a quiet way at the rectory. Mr. Parkinson excused himself, on the plea of low spirits, and Mrs. Wellford remained at home to keep him company; but the two girls and Mr.

Russell gladly availed themselves of the invitation.

It was now July, and the weather as delightful as lovers of green lands and cool woodlands could desire. Mr. Russell had not taken so long a holiday for many years: and though the luxurious ease he possessed at the vicarage might be judged by some, a *perpetual* holiday, still ease enjoyed by the solitary student, and ease enjoyed by a lover at the side of his mistress, are widely different things. It was now positively settled that the wedding should take place at the termination of the mourning for Mrs. Parkinson, that is to say, early in September. Hannah could not reasonably plead any cause for longer delay: she needed no proof of her lover's character, or the durability of his affection; there were no very complicated settlements to be drawn up, no very tedious preparations to allow for—the wedding gown was promised, Dr. Pennington was ready to perform the ceremony, and Rosina and Marianne to act as bridesmaids. Mr. Russell only wished that Lewis had been at home to play bridegroom's man; but he had, years ago, made a half joking promise to call on Frank Russell to perform that character, if there should ever be need of it, and there was no knowing whether Frank might not remind him of the agreement.

Isabella and Sophy were now at home, and made the rectory much gayer than it had been in their absence. There were now repeated visitings with the Hookes and Sewards, and invitations to Sir Robert Bosanquet; novels were seen lying on the table, Sophy was to be heard sol-fa-ing as soon as you entered the garden gate; and Mrs. Pennington and Marianne, under the direction of Isabella, appeared in much smarter dress. So beneficial a change may be made by young ladies who annually visit London! The Wellfords were found to be very agreeable neighbours. Without the formality of regular invitations, detached portions of either family called on each other whenever it suited themselves, whether after breakfast, after dinner, or after tea. On one of these occasions, Dr. Pennington rallied Hannah on her attachment to Summerfield, and extorted from her an acknowledgement that if Stoke Barton were inferior in point of scenery, it was superior in society. Hannah loved every living being in Summerfield, but, even taking her favourite Good into account, she could not, in sober earnest, maintain that Summerfield had any family to compare with the Penningtons; nor were there any of the same class with the Olds, the Sewards, and the Hookes. Mademoiselle Mackau

and Clara accompanied Hannah, Rosina, and Mr. Russell on their return home, for the purpose of bringing back some review or magazine which had been lent to Mr. Parkinson; and Marianne lingering to look after them at the gate, regretted to Sophy that they would not stay to tea.

"Yes, it was a pity," said Sophy, carelessly, "but you know this is Mr. Russell's last day but one, and we could hardly expect him to give it up to us. Here comes a stage or carriage of some sort, Marianne. Don't be seen leaning over the gate."

Marianne, however, had just sufficient curiosity to maintain her station long enough to see whether it were a travelling carriage or a return post-chaise approaching so rapidly. As it whirled round the angle of the road, she caught sight of a face at the window. "Sophy!" cried she, "I do think it is Frederick Ponsonby! No!" she exclaimed, taking another look, "it is Lewis!"

Sophy clapped her hands and ran towards the house. Marianne waited to hold open the gate for the chaise, exchanging, as she did so, a glad look of recognition with her brother, and then followed her example. Quickly as she flew over the lawn, however, Lewis had sprung out and met his father and mother in the hall, before she

arrived, quite breathless, and unable to welcome him otherwise than by throwing her arms round his neck.

"My dear little sister!" cried he.

"Dear, dear Lewis! Who would have thought of expecting you? Why did not you write?"

"Simply because I knew my dear mother's fear of steam-boats, and therefore thought it best not to let her know I had entered one till it had safely landed me on British ground. But let us go into the parlour." And as he followed his father and mother, with Marianne hanging on his arm, Lewis spoke kindly to several of the servants who had hurried into the hall for the chance of a passing word.

"'Sweet, sweet home!'" cried he, as he sat down by his mother.

"How sunburnt he is!" exclaimed Isabella.

"He looks uncommonly well," said his mother. "Ring for tea, Marianne. Lewis must be tired—"

"Tired! not at all, I assure you. I slept last night at the Ponsonbys'. Caroline is in excellent health and spirits, though I think she wants a little country air to repair the ravages made by a spring campaign."

"And pray, Lewis," said the doctor, "how far did you go? To Naples?"

"Yes, sir, and there, oddly enough, I fell in with the Wentworths, which made it very pleasant for me. We went up Vesuvius together. And at Terracina I passed Ned Fishlake on the road. Only think of *his* making the grand tour! He used to be always wishing to *coach a man during the long*, and now, I suppose, his turn has come to be coached. There does not seem to be much *retrenchment* going on among the Wentworths. They live in a very showy manner at Naples. There is an odd little German baron who goes about with them every where—I don't know whether he is engaged to Louisa.—But where are Clara and George?"

"They have walked home with Rosina," began Sophy. "Oh Lewis!—"

"Oh Lewis!" interrupted Marianne, "such news! Who do you think is at Park Place?"

"Who?" said he, colouring.

"Rosina!"

"No?—"

"There was a start for you!" cried Isabella, laughing and looking at her father.

"Yes, indeed!" continued Marianne, "Mrs. Parkinson has died and left her a fortune. Are you not surprised?"

"Very much," said Lewis, looking grave.

"And she is the prettiest girl in the county,"

said Sophy. "That will be a good speculation for you now, Lewis!"

"A good *what*, Sophy?" said he, evidently hurt.

"Oh nonsense!" said Marianne, "Sophy did not mean to affront you, you know. Only think! If you had come five minutes sooner, you would have met Rosina here! Are you not sorry?"

"No."

"Ah, I can hardly believe you. And only think! Hannah is going to be married to Mr. Russell."

"Is she?" cried Lewis with a joyful start, "that *is* good news indeed! I do not know when any thing has given me so much pleasure. Is Hannah at Park Place?"

"Yes, and Mr. Russell too. Mrs. Wellford lives there now."

"What changes, to be sure!" said Lewis. "How came she to be reconciled to her sister?"

"Oh, that was through Hannah's means, I believe," said Mrs. Pennington, "when she was in London."

"Hannah in London?"

"Yes, she went up with that blind old lady—"

"Whom *can* you mean?"

"Lady Worral," said Marianne.

"Poor old lady Worral! Her sight was failing

when I was in Summerfield. So she is really blind?"

"No, no, not now. She went to town to have her eyes couched. But, Lewis, we want to hear all about your travels."

"Oh," said he absently, "I have scarcely any thing to tell."

"Scarcely any thing to tell!" repeated the doctor. "Why, now, here's a fellow hath been from Dan to Beersheba, and tells you 'tis all barren!

> 'Yet through the world the blade has been,
> To see whatever could be seen.'

I expected it would be—'Oh, when I was at Paris—When I was in Florence—When I was in Rome—Some kickshaws, cook, I can't eat plain roast beef!'—What's the use, sirrah," continued he in mock anger, "of your having run from one end of Europe to the other, if you can't talk fine on your return home, and shew you've been abroad to every stranger in five minutes?"

"I suppose," said Lewis smiling, "my father would have me such a travelled fop as that Clermont Lynmere, in the novel you were reading, Marianne—"

"In the novel *you* were reading, if you please, Mr. Lewis. However, poor fellow, we won't worry you for any travellers' tales till you have

had some tea to refresh you, and time to get over your little agitation at the news of—"

"Oh! here is little Clara!" cried Lewis, starting up and running towards her as she sprang into the room—"How are you, my little girl?—George, my boy! how do you do?—Ah Mademoiselle!"

"Mon cher monsieur Lewis," cried she, "que je suis charmée de vous revoir!"

"Ma chere Mademoiselle," responded Lewis, shaking hands with her, "que je suis bien aise de l'entendre! N'avez vous pas manqué les mille petits soins, les aimables attentions, que je vous ai toujours rendu autrefois?"

"Oh, pour cela, non," cried she laughing, "no von but you voult ask such a question. But de house seem so different in your absence, dat I ope it vil nevare be so long time vidout you again."

"Ah," said he, "do not depend upon that. Perhaps my next little trip may be to America or New South Wales. Will you accompany me, Mademoiselle?"

"Mais—c'est selon—" returned she gaily.

"Ceylon?" repeated Lewis, wilfully misunderstanding her, "you are rather out in your geography there. No, Mademoiselle, not Ceylon, nor Nicobar, nor Andaman either, but plain New South Wales, or if you like it better, Australia."

Mademoiselle laughed. "Mais, qu'il est brun!" exclaimed she, turning to Mrs. Pennington, "How he is sunbrowned! Ah Mr. Lewis, vat vould you have given to be of de party I have just left! Tink of Rosina Vellfort having returned to Park Place!"

"So I hear," said Lewis, "a little more cream, if you please, Rosina—Marianne, I mean—I have scalded my mouth."

"Et elle est plus belle que jamais," continued Mademoiselle.

"Speak English if you please, Miss Mackau," said the doctor, "don't you see that Lewis can't understand you?"

"Quelle taille! Qu'elle est fine!" pursued the enthusiastic governess, "c'est une beauté parfaite!"

"By the by, Mademoiselle," said Lewis, anxious to turn the conversation, "you will never guess the present I bought for you at Paris."

"Ah, pray satisfy my curiosity," said she.

"What do you think of a—Nay, I must say it in French, for fear of offending Sophy's delicate ears.—Ladies think a vulgar expression spoken in French loses half its indelicacy—Que pensez vous d'un bonnet de nuit?"

"Ah, fi donc!" cried Mademoiselle. The fact was, that there was a standing joke against her

among her pupils, which originated in her having hastily appeared one night, on a sudden alarm of fire, in a head tire which, to speak in the mildest terms, was hideous. Her extreme attention to the niceties of the toilette made her a little sore on this point.

"Eh bien! Vat does it signify," continued she good humouredly, "if I *have* von or two ugly nightcaps? I have long made up my mind, an hosbond shall nevare see dem."

"Surely," said Lewis, "you are not reduced, Mademoiselle, to find a mirror in the horsepond? I should have thought some clear placid stream would have been as useful, and more romantic."

Having effectually turned the conversation, Lewis now began, in earnest, to give an account of his travels. He had few adventures, indeed, to relate, but many *impressions;* few wonders of nature and art to describe that had not been delineated by hundreds of travellers before him, but many observations and inferences to draw from them, which his affectionate father and mother thought argued great improvement in his powers of judgment and reflection. He had laughable little every-day occurrences, too, in store for the amusement of his sisters, and many inquiries to make of what had been going on at home. These

formed ample matter for conversation till the evening had worn away.

"Well, Lewis," said Marianne, as she lighted her bed-candle, "I suppose you will be ready to-morrow, to pay your respects at Park Place."

"I shall not hurry myself about that," returned he carelessly. "I think my aunt Margaret has rather more claim on me, the first day, than the Miss Wellfords."

Marianne looked attentively at his face. It was rather graver than usual, but told no tales.

"And pray, Lewis,—" said the doctor, drawing his chair closer to his son, as the door closed on the female portion of the family, "pray, Lewis, what views and intentions have you brought home with you? Has eight months' idling given you such a distaste for a quiet jog-trot life, that we are to suppose you in earnest when you spoke to Ma'mselle of a trip to the antipodes? Do you mean to write your travels? Or read Blackstone? Or try how far your three hundred per annum will go towards maintaining a separate establishment? Or settle down into a Will Wimble, and live upon your friends? Or marry a pretty heiress, or what?"

"I mean to be very sober and industrious, father—to read hard, and keep my terms."

"I am heartily glad to hear it, son. You have *not* been spoilt after all."

"No, sir, you will never have occasion, I hope, to repent your indulgence. My wandering freak has now fairly spent itself—and though I *have*, as you say, had eight months' idling, I hope I have not trod classic ground unprofitably. I hope, sir, you will never have occasion to give me the reproof my uncle did to my cousin George —drink my health and hope I shall live to be a man. I hope, my dear father, that you will find I have lost none of my love for home, or acquired any distaste for business. I should deserve—"

"Pshaw! Your modestly worded *hopes*, Lewis, sound mightily like *expectations*. I hope you will answer mine: let me tell you, they are placed rather high. You distinguished yourself at college, and, I trust, will distinguish yourself at the bar; but you are an idle fellow, you know you are, and I shan't be surprised if this goes off in smoke—"

"No, indeed, sir. I shall begin Blackstone to-morrow, on my honour."

"Very well: I am glad to hear it."

CHAPTER XV.

MORNING VISITORS.

WITH returning light, Lewis's intentions partly changed. Finding, from what passed at breakfast, that this was Mr. Russell's "last day," he said he could not deny himself the pleasure of seeing him, and asked Marianne to call with him in the course of the morning, at Park Place. The visit to aunt Margaret might be put off till to-morrow. As soon as breakfast was over, he went to see his horse and dog; and Marianne soon afterwards joined him on the lawn.

"Come, Miss Marianne," said he, drawing her arm within his, "suppose you and I take a little walk together in the shrubbery."

"Well," resumed he, as they pursued their stroll, "have you no news of any sort reserved for my private ear? No flirtations, no offers of marriage?"

"None whatever," said Marianne, laughing.

"What! Is it all off between Isabella and Dr. Knollys?"

"Oh no,—they continue to correspond. How long their engagement is to go on, I cannot imagine, for they seem in no haste to terminate it. Dr. Knollys finds it up hill-work for a young physician to rise into practice in London, and neither of them are disposed to commence housekeeping on less than an elegant sufficiency."

"That means four or five thousand a year, I suppose," said Lewis: "I hate such cold-hearted proceedings! As many hundreds would satisfy me. The Ponsonbys meant it all for the best, but they have done Isabella and Sophy incalculable mischief by taking them so constantly about with them to parties and watering-places, and keeping them in a perpetual whirl of dissipation. What they have gained in polish, they have lost in simplicity of taste; and now, nothing will content them but husbands that can afford to indulge their expensive habits."

"Oh Lewis, you do Isabella and Sophy injustice! They are both extremely attached to home."

"Yes," replied he, "where they have every luxury they can wish, and no trouble, economy or management required in return. So long as they can live surrounded by every comfort, they will never marry for love, any worthy poor fellow who may possess every excellence under the sun ex-

cept a large income. You cannot think, Marianne, what a horror I have of a mercenary woman !"

" But Isabella is *not* mercenary," interrupted Marianne. " She only waits till Dr. Knollys can maintain her in the style to which she has been accustomed. Surely this only amounts to praiseworthy prudence."

" Doubtless," said Lewis, sighing. " Isabella is a good girl and I love her with all my heart; and this, Marianne, is why I regret to see her less than perfect. You cannot think what an indescribable charm is lost by your sex when you become selfishly prudent and calculating. No doubt, total inconsideration of the future is an equally great fault, but it is not the error of the present day, and at any rate it is more characteristic of youth than all this forethought of goods and chattels. Were I in Dr. Knollys's place, I should be affronted at the idea of being married for my powdered footman, rose-wood tables and new chariot. Certainly people should not set up without a sufficiency of this world's goods, but the evil and the misfortune is, that from the expensive tastes and habits fostered in our young girls of the present day, so many superfluities are requisite to make up the amount of their sufficiency. They are dressed out, and carried about to places of entertainment, and surrounded by pretty nick-

nacks of all sorts, to attract notice; and hence, when the object is gained, and some gentleman lays his hand and heart at her feet, she can no longer be happy without her expensive toilette, her public amusements, and her playthings. Consequently, if the gentleman has only a moderate income, he must be refused, or they must plunge into debt for the sake of keeping up appearances, or drawl through years of an interminable engagement, waiting for increase of fortune, till youth and fervour of attachment are worn away. Do not you acknowledge this?"

"There is much truth in it. But, my dear Lewis, you are so very romantic!"

"I am," said he, "and I wish many whom I could name were more so than they are. If I ever marry, Marianne,—of which, by the by, there is very little chance,—it shall be to some one who has known poverty, who has not nursed expensive habits, who can endure little trials and privations for my sake, and love her plainly furnished home better than an Armida's painted palace." He became silent.

"I wish," said Marianne gently, after a long pause, "I wish, Lewis, I could have one little peep into your heart."

"Why, do not you know it already?" said he

colouring. "Have not I spoken unreservedly to you for years?"

"On every subject but one, Lewis."

"Marianne," said he after a moment's hesitation, "I will not affect to misunderstand you. You suspect me of an attachment to Rosina Wellford. I will confess to you, I *was* attached, but I am in love no longer. My affection was not returned, and I have recovered from my disappointment."

"But, dear Lewis," cried Marianne eagerly, "surely there must have been some misunderstanding.—Did you hear it from her own lips, or did you only judge from her manner that she did not think well of you?"

"As that is a question of mere curiosity," said Lewis, "I do not think there is any necessity for my answering it."

"Indeed it is not a question of mere curiosity," said his sister earnestly—"You might so easily be deceived if you judge only from her manner! A girl so often appears different from what she is, from timidity, or caprice, or a thousand motives—"

"There was no misunderstanding, Marianne," said Lewis.

"Well," cried she in a disappointed tone, "it

seems to me so impossible for any one to have been indifferent to you when you really tried to please."

"That is because you happen to be one of the most affectionate little sisters in the world," said Lewis, putting his arm round her waist.

"But indeed," continued she, "I still think you must have been mistaken, or that Rosina thinks more favourably of you now than she did then."

"Whatever she may think of me," said Lewis, slightly contracting his brow, "I shall not enter the lists again.—I shall always think of her with affectionate interest, but with no warmer emotion. We have said enough on this subject, now, Marianne. It had better not be renewed: my mind is fully made up. Is not it time for us to go to Park Place? I shall be glad when the first visit there is over."

"What! when you no longer feel any warmer emotion than affectionate interest?" cried Marianne. Lewis was silent, and looked rather out of countenance.

"I think it is rather too early yet, Lewis."

"Oh, very well.—If you are at all on formal terms with them, it certainly is. I shall go indoors then, and read till you choose to summon

me. I mean to be a very great lawyer, Marianne."

"I am sorry for it—I suppose you will soon run away from us again."

"Not till November."

"And how soon that will come! Why should you be a great lawyer? If you do not mean to marry, you are quite rich enough already. At any rate, you need only read just enough to fit yourself for a country magistrate."

"Every man ought to have a profession."

Marianne sighed, as he turned off towards the library.

When Lewis and his sister went to Park Place, they found a curricle and a close carriage at the door, and an unusual concourse of visitors in the drawing-room. On Hannah and Rosina's return home, the preceding evening, they discovered that Mr. James Parkinson had arrived in their absence. He always considered himself quite at home at Park Place, and visited it as often and for as long a time as suited his pleasure or convenience. Mr. Parkinson, who was very fond of his nephew, had no idea that any one, and especially his nieces, could regard him with less partiality than himself; and gave him such a particularly cordial welcome on the present occasion that there was every probability, if he liked his

quarters, of his inflicting a long visit on the family. When the Penningtons were announced, he was lounging on a chaise-longue in an easy *at-homeish* sort of way, taking an indolent share in the conversation which was carrying on with Sir Robert Bosanquet and Mr. and the Miss Sewards.

"Lewis!" cried Mr. Russell with pleasure and surprise. "Lewis!" echoed Mrs. Wellford and Hannah, rising to meet him. Rosina likewise came forward; cheek, brow, and neck suffused with an universal blush. As their eyes and hands met, she said something about unexpected pleasure, asked when he had returned, and sat down feeling confused and foolish. "Every one must see that I am blushing," thought Rosina; "they will ridicule me, and Lewis will despise me." Anxious to obliterate as soon as possible, the memory of her provoking change of colour, she began to talk and laugh with the Miss Sewards and their brother, only listening by stealth to snatches of Lewis's interesting conversation with Hannah, Mrs. Wellford, and Mr. Russell; when the most natural part for her to act would have been to have bestowed attention on the new comer. As it usually happens when we are playing an assumed character, her non-chalance was carried too far; and Lewis,

whose eye frequently rested on her, was displeased by her apparent levity. Neither did he like the look of the young men gathered around her. Sir Robert was foppish and fine, James Parkinson bold and disagreeable, Mr. Seward too evidently admiring. Rosina, when she came a little to herself, summoned courage to address one or two inquiries to Lewis respecting his travels, and he replied to them at first with ease, and at length with some degree of animation; his chair was drawn closer, and he was beginning to enter with warmth on the subject of Italian music and painting, when the exclamations of the Miss Sewards, who were admiring an unfinished drawing, drew their brother and Sir Robert Bosanquet towards them. Rosina's attention became divided, her eye wandered to the table; and at length, seeing Sir Robert's hand on her portfolio, she started up saying, "Oh, indeed you must not see that," and left Lewis in the middle of a sentence. James Parkinson had mischievously untied the strings; half the contents of the portfolio fell out, and an animated contest ensued.

"Here is a chef-d'œuvre!" cried James Parkinson. "Look here, Seward."

"I beg you will not, Mr. Seward!—Really, Mr. Parkinson, it is too bad—Oh, Sir Robert, pray

give me that little sketch, it is quite unworthy of being looked at—You will be able to make nothing of it—you will not indeed."

James Parkinson proclaimed it to be "a good joke;" the Miss Sewards laughed, and joined in the request that Rosina would allow her beautiful drawings to be seen. It ended in her yielding, with a look of greater resignation, Lewis thought, than the occasion required: and the victors triumphantly examined its contents, extolling them with indiscriminate encomiums. "Come and admire these beautiful drawings, Lewis," said Marianne. Lewis came, but so many persons were assembled round the table, talking fluently and rapturously of different styles and masters, that he thought himself *de trop*, and drew back in proud resignation. At a little distance from the rest stood Hannah in a bow window. Lewis saw her and approached her with a brightened countenance. "Who would have thought, Hannah," said he as he entered the recess, "of all that has passed since we last met!"

"Who, indeed," said Hannah, recalling much more than Lewis could be aware of.

"It seems like a dream," said he, "to find you at Park Place. I shall henceforth have entirely different associations with the house, and connect ideas both pleasant and enlivening with what was

formerly dull and disagreeable. It is the *person*, you know, that endears the *place*. Inanimate walls and chairs and tables, which are nothing *but* walls, chairs, and tables, while they belong to some sordid old miser or peevish dowager, become positively poetical when connected with thoughts of happy hours and pleasant faces. You and Russell," continued Lewis smiling, "have already begun to etherialize and sublimate the atmosphere of Park Place; though to me it does not yet boast the associations of Summerfield."

"Nor am I quite reconciled to the change," said Hannah, "though I say so as seldom as possible from fear of appearing ungrateful to my dear uncle, who is so excessively kind to us."

"But your endurance will meet with its reward," said Lewis lowering his voice, "you have the prospect of returning to Summerfield. Dear Hannah! accept my fervent congratulations—I need not say for what!—It was my hearty wish. I saw from the first, how admirably you were suited to each other. *He* has the best heart and the best understanding of any man I know, and you can and *will* make him happy. You will be the guardian angel of Summerfield.—But has Rosina no regrets?"

"She is very fond of Summerfield," said Hannah, "but I do not think she is as sorry to have

quitted it for life as I should have been in her place. Her mind is more versatile. Besides, she was always attached to this neighbourhood."

"Indeed! Surely her recollections of Park Place could not have been very pleasant."

"But her recollections of the rectory were.—You know she used to spend much of her time at your house."

"Yes, but that was in childhood.—I should have thought the associations of youth were more interesting. It was at Summerfield, her mind was formed. By the by," continued Lewis, lowering his tone, "I had a singular rencontre at Dover—" He glanced round to see who was near, but nobody was within earshot except Mr. Russell, who was reading a newspaper. "Who should be just on the point of stepping into the Calais steamboat," pursued he, "but Huntley!"

Hannah started, but did not change colour.

"He looked thinner and graver," continued Lewis, "than when I saw him last, and had a very pretty young woman leaning on his arm whom I concluded to be his wife, but he introduced her to me as his sister. Both were in deep mourning; and he told me that he had lost his mother, and was taking his sister for change of scene to the south of France."

"Poor Huntley!" exclaimed Mr. Russell—

"That speaks well for him, Hannah, does it not?"

Lewis started. "Yes, I am thankful,—pleased to hear it," said Hannah. "It was more than we had reason to expect."

"What can you both be thinking of?" said Lewis.—"You must have misunderstood me! Pleased to hear of old Mrs. Huntley's death? More than you had reason to expect?"

Mr. Russell smiled. "*Not* pleased to hear of Mrs. Huntley's death," said he, "we had seen that in the papers, but pleased that he should have taken his sister to the south of France."

"Why should that have been more than you had reason to expect?" inquired Lewis, still looking perplexed. "That was no great stretch of politeness, was it?"

Mr. Russell and Hannah were silent.

"She is a ladylike, elegant-looking girl," continued Lewis.

"Very," said Hannah.

"Why, where on earth did you ever see her?" cried he.

"Oh—she was staying at our house—"

"Indeed!" said Lewis, catching a quick, apprehensive look towards Rosina.

"Yes—when her brother was ill—"

"Ill, at Summerfield?—Pray, was Rosina head

nurse?" said he with a laugh that was meant to be careless.

"Mrs. Wellford was," said Mr. Russell abruptly. —"Well, Lewis, what is your opinion of the French ministry?"

The departure of the Sewards and Sir Robert Bosanquet here broke up the party; and Lewis continued conversing on foreign politics till Marianne proposed returning home. Mr. Russell walked with them to the park gates, and Lewis gaily inquired whether he were provided with a friend to support him through the approaching ceremony, adding that he should feel very happy to perform the office. Mr. Russell cheerfully accepted his proffered services; and with this agreement, the friends shook hands and parted.

"Well, Lewis," said Marianne.

"Well, Marianne," returned he.

"Does not your resolution begin to waver, now you have seen Rosina again?"

"No," replied Lewis, "she is no prettier than she was before, and I am sorry to see that she has grown affected."

"Oh Lewis! When she blushed, even to her neck, on seeing you!"

"She might well do that," said Lewis quickly, "when she remembered how we last parted!"

"Well," said Marianne, "I certainly could not have believed you so unforgiving."

"*I* unforgiving?" said Lewis. "I forgave her long ago, and told her so at the time. But I cannot forget. Say no more about it, Marianne;—you will only injure the cause you mean to defend. Love is not the whole business of a man's life, nor of a woman's either. Rosina and I can be very happy without interfering with each other."

This was spoken with a decision of manner which forbade the continuance of the subject.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRIDAL PREPARATIONS.

MR. RUSSELL'S term of absence expired; and if his loss were most felt by Hannah, yet it was not unregretted by Mrs. Wellford and Rosina. James Parkinson poorly supplied his place: he talked, indeed, as fluently, and a great deal louder;—but

"Much fruit of sense beneath was rarely found."

For rarely, read never. His whole talk, (conversation it was not,) ran on actors, actresses, opera-singers, and ballet-dancers, English, French, German, and Italian,—dwelling on their merits, which nobody knew any thing about, and descanting on their private histories, which often made Hannah and Rosina blush with shame and indignation, while Mrs. Wellford wished him at Jericho. Indoors, he never had any employment but eating, reading the newspapers, and worrying the dogs; luckily, he spent much of his time in the stables, and in riding about the country. When he sallied

forth alone, it was all very well, nothing could be better; but Mr. James Parkinson was one who always preferred having a companion to being without one; and Rosina found the pleasure of her daily rides considerably diminished by this addition to their party. However, the case was without remedy, for James Parkinson, who had no idea that his attentions could be otherwise than acceptable, bestowed them more generously on her than on any one else. Mrs. Wellford he looked on as a monstrous bore; Hannah he considered insipid: Rosina, to use the phraseology of his thoughts, was a little, brown thing, with nothing but a pair of fine eyes and rather a *piquant* manner to recommend her; a mere country girl, without beauty or fashion, but well enough to amuse oneself with for a week or two in the summer, when nothing was going forward. Accordingly, he diverted himself with paying her absurd compliments, which he mischievously imagined would half turn her brain, worrying her to play and sing his favourite opera airs, which she gladly did for the sake of temporary peace, and teazing her out of her silent contempt into contests on manners and morals, for the praiseworthy purpose of seeing the "little thing" work herself into a passion! One night, when he had been unusually tiresome, Hannah, knowing his predi-

lection for theatrical subjects, proposed that he should read aloud one of Shakspeare's plays. He had no objection, and after some picking and choosing, set out with Richard the Third, which he proceeded to read in a manner reflecting little praise on his schoolmaster. In the midst of a tragic speech, which he was declaiming very badly, he stopped short with—

"Oh, did I ever tell ye the pun Cooper made this spring in the Critic? Jones came forward to introduce Yates and Yarnold to him, and observed in a laughing way, it was odd they should be two Y's. 'Oh,' says Cooper, 'I dare say we shan't find them too wise.' Ha, ha, ha! There was another good thing—Jones wanted to speak to the leader of the band, and called him by name, Mr. Day, shading his eyes all the while from the stage lights, this way, and says he, 'Mr. Day, Mr. Day—how d'ye do, Mr. Day, and how's Mrs. Day and all the little Mornings?' Where was I? Oh, suppose we skip the next act or two and get on to the last scene. I know Richard's death by heart. If you'll hold the book, Miss Wellford, and give me the cues, I'll play it for you."

Hannah and Rosina never asked him to read Shakspeare again.

On Hannah's proposing to call at the rectory,

soon after Mr. Russell's departure, Rosina seemed rather reluctant to accompany her. "It will hardly do for us to visit the Penningtons so frequently, I think," said she, "now that Lewis has returned."

"Why so?" said Hannah, looking surprised. "We are not going to call on *him*, you know; and have you any particular objection to meeting him by chance?"

"Oh—no—"

They went; and saw only the female part of the family. Lewis was studying in his own room.

"Well, Rosina, you need not have been afraid," said Hannah, smiling, as they walked home.

"No, indeed," said Rosina, rather gravely.

The following day, when she was riding with her uncle and James Parkinson, they met Lewis on horseback.

"So Rosina has learned to ride," said he to Marianne, on his return. "Who taught her? James Parkinson? She sits her horse remarkably well."

"Oh, I believe her uncle and old John shared the honour of teaching her between them. James Parkinson had nothing to do with it."

How I should have liked to have taught her, thought Lewis, falling into a reverie.

He often met her afterwards, during their rides,

and could not always prevent a cloud from crossing his brow when he saw James Parkinson close to her, talking with an air of easy assurance, while her uncle jogged leisurely on, immersed in his own speculations. It was enough to vex any one who had any friendly feeling towards her, to see her thus "sprighted with a fool"—and Lewis's displeasure at the selection of her companion argued no wish to take his place. Sometimes, indeed, when Rosina's eyes seemed to say "won't you ride with us?" his resolution faultered, and he turned his horse's head in compliance with the silent invitation. These were the only occasions on which they now saw each other; and Rosina observed to Hannah, with a stifled sigh, that Lewis's character had been much improved during the last twelvemonth—he was not so boyish and trifling as he used to be at Summerfield.

It was during one of these rides, when Lewis, half angry at his weakness in yielding to the facination, found himself accompanying Rosina at a bridle pace along a steep shady lane about a mile from Park Place, Mr. Parkinson leading the way, and his nephew humming a surly tune in the rear,—when Mr. Parkinson suddenly drew his rein before a green swing gate opening on a winding gravel path prettily planted with shrubs, and addressed Lewis with,

"A nice place this, Mr. Pennington!—Captain Ellicott has been obliged to give it up, because his wife is ordered to try a milder air; and he wants me to buy it. I promised to go over the house some day; what say you, Rosina? Shall we do so now?"

"I should like it very much," said she. Lewis immediately unfastened the gate, and held it open for his companions.

"What a sweet place!" cried Rosina, as they came in front of a good sized cottage *ornée*, built of free-stone, with oriel windows, and a gothic entrance porch smothered in roses.

"A sweet place indeed!" echoed Lewis, springing from his horse, and lifting Rosina from hers before James Parkinson had got his foot out of his stirrup.

"What a fairy-like lawn, dotted over with little flower beds! And Lewis, look at this superb magnolia!"

A sharp ring at the bell given by Mr. Parkinson, brought out in the first place an aristocratic looking Newfoundland dog who offered no offence, and in the second, a neatly dressed old woman. She admitted them with many curtsies, and hurrying through a very pretty hall, unlocked the parlour and drew up the blinds.

"Furnished, is it?" said James Parkinson,

looking round. "Here's a harp,"—giving a twang at one of the strings—"This is a monstrously comfortable easy chair. I say, uncle, it's worth while to buy the house for the sake of this chair. See how easy it rolls. Take care of your toes, Miss Wellford. It puts me in mind of some verses I learnt at school—

"Thy throne a sliding car, indebted to no wheels.—"

Oh, but this *has* wheels, so it is n't quite à propos."

"What a sweet face!" said Rosina, looking at a portrait over the chimney piece.

"That's Mrs. Ellicott," said James, "she looks consumptive, does n't she?"

"She *is* consumptive, I fear, sir," said the old woman, sighing. "Master thinks of taking her to Italy. He painted that picture of mistress himself—there are some others of his paintings in the study. See here, sir," continued she to Lewis, who followed her into the adjoining room, "what a beautiful likeness that is of our Neptune, as large as life."

"Well, that *is* something like a picture!" said James Parkinson, staring at it in admiration, "but I think he has given him too much black. Here, boy, here—" and he began whistling for Neptune, that he might compare him with his picture.

"How many happy hours have most likely been spent here!" said Rosina, looking thoughtfully around on the books and paintings.

How many happy hours *might* be spent here, thought Lewis.

"Did you know much of the Ellicotts?"

"Not much. They had not long been married, and lived very much to themselves. Mrs. Ellicott's delicate health precluded her from visiting. They only lived here about a twelvemonth. I used to see Captain Ellicott driving his wife about in a little, low chaise; and as far as I could judge of him, he appeared a frank, pleasant, well-informed man. They seemed very happy in each other."

"I say, Miss Wellford," interrupted James, "don't you think this room wants a new carpet?"

Mr. Parkinson was meanwhile talking to the old woman's husband, who had been conducting him over the premises. "It seems a nice little place in excellent repair," said he, returning to his companions, "I think I shall buy it."

"This is called Elderton, is it not?" said Rosina.

"Yes, Elderton, from that elder tree yonder," said James. "Good bye, Neptune, my fine fellow!"

As they rode home, Rosina and Lewis severally thought how contentedly they could live, "the

looking round. "Here's a harp,"—giving a twang at one of the strings—"This is a monstrously comfortable easy chair. I say, uncle, it's worth while to buy the house for the sake of this chair. See how easy it rolls. Take care of your toes, Miss Wellford. It puts me in mind of some verses I learnt at school—

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"She *is* consumptive, I fear, sir," said the old woman, sighing. "Master thinks of taking her to Italy. He painted that picture of mistress himself—there are some others of his paintings in the study. See here, sir," continued she to Lewis, who followed her into the adjoining room, "what a beautiful likeness that is of our Neptune, as large as life."

"Well, that *is* something like a picture!" said James Parkinson, staring at it in admiration, "but I think he has given him too much black. Here, boy, here—" and he began whistling for Neptune, that he might compare him with his picture.

thing to say to him. He threatened to return in the pheasant-shooting season, but that was a distant evil, and needed not to disturb the pleasure of the present moment. A few days of deep, yet perhaps rather melancholy enjoyment of each other's society, were shared by the mother and daughters before the return of Mr. Russell to claim Hannah at the altar. On the preceding Saturday, Matthew arrived from town, and Harry from Heeley, to be present at the ceremony. It was a delightful re-union; the young men came resolved to enjoy their holiday as much as possible, and were charmed with the rides, walks, and society of Stoke Barton. Mrs. Wellford was proud of her sons, and Mr. Parkinson pleased with his nephews: Isabella and Sophy Pennington were glad to have two such nice looking young men to walk with them through the village, and laugh with them at their work tables. Marianne could judge of their sisters' feelings by her own towards Lewis; and Lewis was content to shut up his law books for a whole day, to shew them the prettiest ride in the neighbourhood. Monday brought Mr. Russell, no longer "poor Mr. Russell," but the happiest of men; and the same evening also brought Lewis to Park Place with a very troubled countenance.

"Russell, will you come into the library for a moment?" said he, as soon as he had hastily spoken to each of the family.

Mr. Russell immediately followed him, anxious to know the cause of his perturbation. "I am sorry," said Lewis as soon as they were alone, "that I shall be unable to play groom's man, Russell, after all, for I must set off instantly to London. There has been a parliamentary quarrel between my brother-in-law, Ponsonby, and Mr. Hantfort, member for ——. High words were exchanged in the house, and Caroline has written to me in the greatest agony, fearing that they will fight, and knowing that I have more influence over Frederick than any one else. I may yet be in time to accommodate matters, as Hantfort is at this moment laid up with the gout, but perhaps things may have gone too far to be made up, after all; for Ponsonby, when his blood is once up, has a fury of a temper. At any rate, I shall not be here on Thursday; therefore, God bless you, Russell, and make you as happy as you deserve and I desire you to be. It is a disappointment to me, but cannot be helped. Make my compliments and excuses to the ladies, will you? I cannot return to them now." And, shaking hands with his friend, Lewis ran off.

As Mr. Russell concluded that Lewis did not

wish the cause of his journey to be generally known, he merely stated on his return to the drawing-room that a sudden call to London on business, obliged him to start in that night's mail, and that it was probable he would be detained in town during the remainder of the week. Every one was surprised and sorry; but Rosina's lamentations were the most pathetic.

"Oh, poor Lewis!" cried she, "how sorry he will be to be absent from the wedding. Besides, Mr. Russell, what is to be done for a bride's-man?"

"I mean to be bride's-man myself," said he.

"Well, bridegroom's man, then. You must have Matthew or Harry—"

"I shall be most happy," said Matthew.

"To tell you the truth," said Mr. Russell, "I have got into a little scrape. My cousin Frank and I promised each other, some five or six years back, that whichever of us was married first, the other should hold glove and ring. Frank is at this present moment in a most violent rage with me for having forgotten him, and has written me a letter in which reproaches and congratulations are most ingeniously interwoven."

"Then do send for him by all means," cried Rosina, "it is quite shameful for a clergyman to break his word! There is time for you to write

to him by the mail, and he will receive the letter to-morrow, and set off the same evening, and arrive here on Wednesday, and spend a long pleasant day with us before the wedding."

Hannah looked rather sorry that the plan should have been proposed; but Mr. Parkinson saying something kind about any friend and kinsman of Mr. Russell's being welcome at Park Place, the matter was settled; and as Mr. Russell folded up his hastily written letter, he looked so much pleased, that Hannah could not find it in her heart to be angry.

Tuesday passed with dream-like quickness, for even the wedding of so quiet a person as Hannah excited no small stir. Matthew and Harry went to and fro several times between the park and the rectory, Hannah was packing up, and giving away various trifles, Mr. Russell and Mr. Parkinson were closeted together in the library, Rosina was busily making up bride-favours, Marianne was helping her, and admiring the wedding bonnets, and the maid servants laughing and whispering, trimming caps with white ribbon, and trying on new gloves. Frank Russell arrived in the night coach on Wednesday morning, and his cousin walked down to the King's Head to meet him. They were very glad to see each other and renew their early friendship.

"Well, Russell, I never thought your turn would come first," said Frank, laughing, "though you are the eldest. But don't think that I am single for want of asking; for, in candour be it spoken, I proposed to Emmeline Huntley as soon after her mother's death as decency would permit. I was a fool for my pains, for the charming girl refused me. However, I believe that was partly the fault of my own precipitancy."

"I am glad to see, Frank, that you keep up your spirits."

"Oh—I am rather melancholy about it, now and then, I assure you—I have hardly had leisure yet to grow thin. Give me time, sir, give me time! I could not bear the poor thing to be in want of a home.—Apart from that, I might have thought twice before I spoke once, and so have escaped a mortification. But I will do Huntley justice, and say that his conduct has been beyond what might have been expected. He softened very much during his mother's last illness, promised to befriend Emmeline, and has hitherto been as good as his word. Oh, it's not unlikely they'll rub on together, all the rest of their lives, like old Sir Joshua and his sister—Emmeline taking the sour with the sweet, and receiving a word of kindness as compensation in full for a week's *brusquerie*. All old feuds are hushed up

now, and she told me with tears in her eyes, that Arthur had left her nothing to desire. So that, whatever I may heretofore have justly said in his dispraise, I will now uphold him to be an altered character."

"Do so, Frank," said Mr. Russell, "whenever there is occasion, but we will not discuss his merits or demerits at Park Place to-day, if you please, as his name might awaken some unpleasant associations."

Frank looked and was going to express his surprise, but at this moment they came in sight of the house. "Upon my word, a fine mansion!" said he. "Those trees, too, are well grouped around it. Is that Miss Wellford, bounding down the steps of the portico with the grace of a young fawn?"

"No, that is Rosina," said Mr. Russell.

Frank Russell made a pleasing impression on the party who were waiting breakfast for him. He was little, and dark, and had what Rosina called an *odd* countenance, with a kind of French liveliness of manner, and a pair of laughing, restless black eyes that seemed equally on the look out for the amusing and the picturesque. He, on the other hand, was much struck with the beauty of the sisters, and could not help fancying that Rosina's features were familiar to him. London

news was discussed, and plans were proposed for the morning. The exertion of entertaining a stranger was serviceable in preventing the spirits of some of the family from visibly flagging. Rosina's heart sank within her when she thought how soon Hannah would be missed from her accustomed place; but she heroically smothered her sighs, and laughed and talked with commendable diligence.

"What makes you look so perplexed, Frank?" said Mr. Russell after breakfast, as he saw his cousin look after Rosina and then pass his hand over his brow as if to collect his thoughts.

"It is unaccountable," said Frank, turning to Hannah. "Your sister, you say, has never been in town, and yet I cannot get rid of the whimsical notion that I have seen her before, though I cannot tell where or when, and a face like hers is not easily forgotten.—Oh! now I have it," cried he with sudden delight, "the cottage girl at the British Institution! Huntley—" He suddenly stopped.

"Ah yes, it was my sister's picture," said Hannah with a smile. "I saw it there too, and was as much surprised by it, as you can be now to recognize the original. It was a mere sketch when Mr. Huntley left Summerfield."

"It was a most fascinating picture," said Frank,

"I looked at it for hours." And feeling that he was upon forbidden ground, he began inwardly to marvel *why* it was forbidden. Hannah's even manner convinced him that she could not be a person concerned; and as Rosina was the original of the picture, it seemed most likely that she had been the enamoured or cruel fair one, on whose account Mr. Russell had formerly been so particular in his inquiries. The young people were now prepared to shew him the grounds, and Frank offered his arm to Rosina, resolved to steer as clear of Huntley as possible. Matthew and Harry hurried them on towards the hermitage, while Mr. Russell and Hannah lingered behind. They were soon left to themselves, and Hannah then asked with a gentle smile, why he had seemed so uneasy at his cousin's casual mention of Huntley's name. "Cannot you trust me?" said she.

"I own, Hannah," said Mr. Russell, "that it was weak of me to suspect you of regret. Yet tell me," said he earnestly, "if you were now to hear that Huntley had become all that you once believed, all that you ever wished him to be, should you feel no infirmity of purpose? Should you not repent having plighted your faith to mine?"

"No," said Hannah, looking up to him with

her clear, truth-telling blue eyes, "if Mr. Huntley were all this, and stood before me at this moment to claim the hand that is even yet my own, I should answer like the faithful Indian woman —'My husband's image stands between our hearts, and prevents mine from seeing thine.' I should be pleased, grateful, delighted, to hear of such a happy change, but it would be for his sake alone."

"Hannah! on my soul I believe you!" exclaimed her lover.

He then repeated to her his cousin Frank's persuasion that Mrs. Huntley's death had made a deep and salutary impression on her son.

"I am rejoiced to hear it," said Hannah. "And, should he ever feel that religion is, after all, the support and comfort to which he must cling, who shall say that it was not you who first awoke good thoughts in his mind?"

"And who shall say, Hannah, that it was not you who first taught him that self-government, even in this world, is our best policy?"

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRIDESMAID'S SORROWS.

THE walking party did not return from the park till summoned by the luncheon bell. It was then proposed to shew Frank Russell a fine view within a few miles' distance; and the gentlemen were seen no more till dinner time.

In the evening, there were settlements to sign, and presents to be produced; and Rosina, to cover Hannah's low spirits and break up the formality of the party, opened the piano forte at Matthew's request, and played some of his favourite airs. Her brothers and Frank Russell followed her to the instrument, and pleaded for a song. Rosina was not quite equal to the effort; she felt that she must be either thoughtlessly gay or very melancholy; and declined the proposal, but offered to accompany them in a glee.

"What shall it be?" said Harry, turning over a music book. "'When shall we three meet again?' That's a fine thing, is n't it?"

"Hush, that will never do to-night," whispered

Rosina. Harry's eyes followed hers towards the farther end of the room, where Hannah, Mrs. Wellford and Mr. Russell were sitting with their backs towards the piano, Hannah's hand locked in her mother's; and he gave his sister a nod of intelligence.

"Come, Rosina," cried Mr. Russell, "will you not give me my favourite 'Sweet Helen'—the prettiest of English ballads,—for the last time?"

"Last time! Nonsense; I shall soon sing it to you at Summerfield," replied Rosina, as she saw Hannah quickly turn away her head. She immediately began the accompaniment, and sang the beautifully simple air with great sweetness, though rather more hurriedly than usual.

"That ballad deserves to be an English classic," said Frank Russell.

"Here is a good boat glee, which I have found," said Harry, placing an open book on the music desk.

Trio and quartetto succeeded each other, and then, Matthew, fastening together his flute, exclaimed, "Sing the echo song in Comus, Rosy,

'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen,'

and I will play the echo on the lawn, as I used to do at Summerfield." He opened the French window and ran out into the garden. It was a fine moonlight night; and when the echo song was

ver, the singers joined him on the lawn. Hannah was enjoying too much pensive luxury to wish to quit her mother and lover.

The bridal morning arose clear and sunshiny; the guests assembled, the bridesmaids were bright with smiles, the bride adorned with modest and becoming blushes, and the bridegroom looking his best and feeling his happiest. As Marianne knew nothing of the cause of Lewis's departure, her spirits were not damped by the dread of any domestic calamity; and Rosina was too affectionate to embitter Hannah's wedding day by dwelling on her own regrets. Every thing went off very well; the toilette, the breakfast, the ceremony, passed like a dream;—then came the rattling of wheels, the ringing of bells,—kisses, embraces, cordial shakes of the hand, felicitations, leave-takings, smiles, tears,—and lo!

> "The bridal is over—the guests are all gone,
> The bride's only sister sits weeping alone:
> The wreath of white roses is torn from her brow,
> And the heart of the bridesmaid is desolate now."

A *very* hearty fit of crying did Rosina indulge in, when she had locked herself into her own room, that room which was now to be *only* her own—that room where dressing gowns, combs, brushes, pins, trinket boxes, silver paper, smelling bottles, and all the apparatus of the toilette, lay in dreary

confusion, speaking intelligibly of the busy scene which had so soon been succeeded by melancholy silence—where the glass at which Hannah had dressed herself, and the chair on which Hannah had sat, still remained as she had left them, but where Hannah would never be again. Who could tell all the dismal things that might now happen? Rosina's tears streamed afresh as her inventive mind conjured up a host of domestic calamities, of which sickness and death were not the least conspicuous. But she presently recollected that it was selfish to be thus abandoning herself to all the luxury of woe, while her mother was in need of consolation. Matthew, Harry, and Frank Russell were to pass the day at the rectory; and Mrs. Pennington came round to persuade Mrs. Wellford and Rosina to join them at dinner, but they preferred spending a melancholy afternoon by themselves. Poor Mrs. Wellford!—"Oh Mrs. Pennington! such a loss!" said she, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. It might have been supposed that her favourite child had just died. Mrs. Pennington could condole with her; for she had had the misfortune to *lose* a daughter in the same way. How feeble are we mortals who cannot bear the weight of our own gratified wishes! The darling desire of Mrs. Wellford's heart had just been fulfilled.

On the following morning, the young men returned to their respective homes, and Rosina was left to feel the dreary extent of her solitude. She was even bereft of her friend Marianne; for Captain Pennington and his bride arrived at Portsmouth, and as their stay in England was to be short, they intended to remain with the lady's friends in London, without visiting Stoke Barton, and Dr. Pennington and his family hastened to town to enjoy their society. Rosina felt herself oppressed by a kind of creeping listlessness, but she shook off this insidious temptation to indolence, and did her best to supply Hannah's place to her mother. To hide her want of spirits for conversation, she read aloud while Mrs. Wellford worked, and found this an excellent method of turning the current of her thoughts. It struck her that now would be a good opportunity to commence a regular course of study which Mr. Russell had recommended her; and in pursuance of his directions, not merely to store her memory with a catalogue of facts, but to trace their tendency and consequences. In this view, history assumed a new character, and no longer appeared a mere record of crimes.

Matthew now attained his twenty-first year, and with all due form, entered into partnership with Mr. Good, under whose roof it was settled

that he should for the present remain. Hannah and her husband after spending a fortnight at the sea-side, and staying a few days with some of Mr. Russell's relations, returned to Summerfield; and before the honeymoon was quite out, Rosina received a pressing invitation from her sister to visit her in her new home. Perhaps even an invitation to London would not have been so joyfully accepted. Rosina had some scruples, indeed, about leaving her mother, but these were overruled by Mrs. Wellford, who reminded her that her own turn would soon come. Rosina therefore wrote to tell Hannah she might expect to see her at the end of the week; and with a girlish love of *taking by surprise*, she set off on Thursday, in her uncle's post chariot under the protection of his staid housekeeper, Mrs. Hawkins, joyously anticipating her sister's delight at seeing her a day or two sooner than she had expected. She arrived at Summerfield early in the afternoon, was greatly amused to see Joseph throw down his spade in a hurry, and run into the house for his livery jacket,—hurried into the vicarage parlour without stopping to speak to Mary White's comely niece who was tying on a clean apron,—and found it empty.

This was no more than she had deserved. Susan followed her to inquire after her "mamma,"

and to say that master and mistress had dined an hour ago and were gone out to take a walk. Rosina was disappointed; however, there was still a surprise in store for them on their return: she told Susan she wanted no dinner, but begged to have a sandwich, and then began to look around her. Rosina had no very clear recollections of the vicarage as it had existed in her father's time, but she seemed to remember the room in which she now stood, presenting a confused litter of hoops, whips, skipping ropes and children's implements, which had resisted Mrs. Wellford's attempts at keeping in tolerable order. She had also spent half an hour in this parlour one day when a sudden hail-storm had obliged her and her mother to accept Mr. Russell's invitation to take shelter. Painful remembrances had then filled Mrs. Wellford's eyes with tears; but Rosina, as she looked around on the nicely kept furniture and orderly arrangement of papers and books, had thought the face of things much changed for the better, and only regretted that there were no other signs of domestic enjoyment than a pair of slippers and an arm-chair by the fire-side, and Newton's Principia on the table. But now, the somewhat dreary arrangement of parlour comforts was altered, without detracting from neatness: a shawl and parasol lay on a

chair; screens painted by Rosina and fresh gathered flowers decorated the chimney-piece; Shakspeare's Cymbeline occupied the window-seat; and the pretty work-table which had been Harry's wedding present, displayed the womanly accessories of scissors, needle-case, and emery bag. All denoted feminine but not solitary occupation, for there were *two* chairs removed from their station against the wall, and a letter serving as a book-mark to Cymbeline, was directed to Mr. Russell.

Mary White now came in, smiling and curtseying, followed by Joseph laden with a luncheon tray much more hospitably filled than Rosina required; and while she made her solitary dinner, Mary lingered to talk with pride and pleasure of her young mistress, and to narrate the news of the village. "Mr. Matthew looks very well, ma'am," said she, "and drops in to see mistress very often, but we seldom see him of an evening—I fancy he's a good deal at Mrs. Greenway's, and always welcome, as he must be, to be sure, wherever he goes; and Mr. Harry has come over to dine with us once or twice on Sundays. The lieutenant, ma'am, as your *ma* let the cottage to, keeps it up very nice indeed, and his wife is making a beautiful *grotter* in the garden, of shells she picked up at the sea-side. Betty had me in to look at it the

other day, and it's very handsome indeed—a star in the middle, with a bit of looking glass in the centre, and all the little spokes as I may say of the star made of large shells to match, and the spaces between filled up with small stones and bits of glass and cheyne, and little twigs dipped in sealing-wax to look like coral; and over all an arch, with sea-weed and commoner shells, such as rows of cockles, and mussels to correspond, and the jessamine trailed over all—the floor's made with pebble stones, in squares and dimonds, and there's a seat for the lieutenant, with a lion's head at each elbow.—To be sure, it's uncommonly purty and ingenous, and I think the lady gives up more of her time to it than the garden, for I don't see her raking the borders and tying up the flowers as you used to do, ma'am. To be sure, she's a very nice lady, though uncommon ornary in respect of her features, and the lieutenant seems a nice, merry, free-spoken man, and they've three fine sperruted little boys.—You'll meet them, I dare say, to-morrow evening at *our* Mrs. Greenway's, ma'am, for there's going to be a little party there, in honour, I suppose, of master and mistress."

Here Mary interrupted herself to observe that master and mistress were in sight.

"Don't tell them I am come," cried Rosina, turning to the window. It was so clustered with

flowers that there was little danger of her being seen, but she could perceive Hannah, in her simple white gown and straw bonnet, looking exactly the same as ever, leaning on her husband's arm and slowly walking up the lane. "They little guess that I am here," thought Rosina triumphantly, as she marked their leisurely pace. "I wish, however, they would walk a little faster—But they have no need to run after happiness like other folks, since they possess it in themselves. Bless me! they have come to a full stop—Hannah's shoestring is untied—And now they are lingering to look at a view which they have seen every day for years and years! I suppose Mr. Russell is inhaling

"*The luxury of unexpected sweets.*"

I fear the dear, good man, with all his charming qualities, is something of a dawdle!—Oh, now his hand is on the gate!" And, unable to restrain herself any longer, Rosina ran into the garden to meet them.

Mr. Russell and Hannah were as much delighted to see her as might have been expected. They scolded her for not letting them know when she was coming, that they might have waited dinner for her, and wanted her to dine over again. This she declined, and then mutual inquiries succeeded

with great rapidity. Hannah began to speak of her delightful visit to the sea-side.

"Do not be deceived, Rosina, into the belief, that she was overwhelmed at first sight of the sea, with astonishment and admiration," cried Mr. Russell. "When we arrived at our journey's end, it was quite dark; and the solemn roaring of the waves greatly affected Hannah's imagination; but the next morning, when she looked out of her window, she was obliged to own herself disappointed. I believe she had expected to see waves running mountain high, with all the poetical auxiliaries of mermaids, dolphins, stranded ships and shrieking mariners."

"I was not quite so foolish as that," said Hannah smiling, "but it was low water, the sky was clouded, and certainly the sea was much less sublime than I had expected. I could not persuade myself that my eyes actually traversed a surface of so many miles as I was assured was the case. Instead of growing fainter as it receded into distance like land scenery, the sea appeared deeper in colour as it approached the horizon. On remarking it to Mr. Russell, he said that so our hopes should grow deeper and brighter as they approached heaven, while earthly memories faded in receding years."

"Upon my word, Hannah!—I did not expect

my little effusion of fancy to be honoured by such a long residence in your memory. In return, I will do you the justice to say that you were sufficiently impressed with the sublimity of the sea when the tide came in. I could not get you away from the beach, though the deafening roar of the waves put an end to all conversation. Dr. Johnson, whose thoughts have been compared to pebbles formed and polished in the mighty deep, resembled the briny element in more respects than one. Mr. Ocean is a very pragmatical fellow in society, and will let no one be heard or thought of but himself."

"I was afraid, one night," said Hannah, "that we were going to have the awful spectacle of a storm—"

"Afraid!" repeated Mr. Russell. "I assure you, Rosina, that only a few hours before, Hannah had actually been wishing to hear 'the distant thunder, like a signal drum,' calling heaven's artillery to the battle; yet no sooner did some very innocent primrose-coloured lightning begin to flit playfully in the west, while the shrill whistle of the gradually rising wind

"Seemed calling to the clouds that lagged behind,"*

than her courage oozed away: she began to tor-

* Mary Anne Brown.

ment herself about some poor men whom we had seen go out in their herring boats, covered her eyes with her hand at every flash of lightning, and finally begged me to shut the window and draw the curtains."

"Hannah had never a strong *penchant* for thunder or lightning," said Rosina.

"I am sorry," said Hannah, "that we are going to Lady Worral's to-night, instead of enjoying a long uninterrupted evening at home."

"Yes," said Mr. Russell, "but if people *will* take us by surprise, and come when they are not expected, we cannot be answerable for our engagements."

"Are you going to Lady Worral's?" said Rosina. "Well, I am resigned—"

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Russell, "for you will have need of all your resignation. Lady Worral looks upon it as a settled thing that now you live at Park Place, you will marry Lewis Pennington; and as you know and I know, that nothing is farther than such marriage, from your and his thoughts, of course you will be under the necessity of undeceiving her."

Rosina bit her lip. "That speech is so exactly like you!" said she.

"Is it? Then I flatter myself it was at once

neat, sensible, and elegant.—Ah! here comes Matthew."

Matthew had seen his uncle's carriage in the stable yard of the White Hart, and had thence justly guessed that his sister had arrived at the vicarage.

In the evening, they fulfilled their engagement to Lady Worral. Only Mr. and Mrs. Good were invited to meet them; and in due time the card table was set out.

"And is it possible you are a whist player, Hannah?" exclaimed Rosina, as she saw her rise and join the card players.

"A very bad one at present," said Hannah.

"We are teaching her," said Mr. Good, "she will play better in time."

"It will not be the first time, Rosina," said Mr. Russell, drawing his chair towards her, "that you and I have been reduced to amuse each other in this room."

"Poor man! what should you have done if I had not been here? Books there are none; you must have gone to sleep. Pray," said she in a lower tone, "are you not rather jealous at Hannah's being monopolized by the whist players?"

"Cards," replied Mr. Russell in the same subdued tone, "I detest as the vehicles of gambling,

and despise as one of the most frivolous amusements

> "That idleness has ever yet contrived
> To fill the void of an unfurnished brain:"

—but the intention sometimes justifies the deed; at any rate, it makes what was only insignificant, praiseworthy, when springing from kindness of heart. Lady Worral depends on cards for her evening amusement; at her age it is not likely that all the preaching in the world would induce her to abandon it; and at most, it can only be called a loss of time, which in her case, would most probably not be filled up by any thing better. Hannah dislikes cards as much as I do; they are actually irksome to her; and as she is a bad player, no one can suspect her of having recourse to them from avarice; neither has she been shamed into following the customs of the world. Pure good-nature inclines her to sacrifice her time now and then to an old, infirm friend, whom she loves for many instances of generosity and attachment, but from whom she has no pecuniary expectations. Influenced by this benevolent spirit, I assure you I consider Hannah's attention to 'ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife, and spades the emblem of untimely graves,' as not merely harmless but highly meritorious. Look at her now: she

would rather be sitting between us at this moment; but you see no weariness on her countenance; she is applying herself seriously to the game, and listening to Mr. Good's witticisms, and Lady Worral's reproofs of her want of judgement, with equal sweetness."

"And do the same principles which you admire so much in Hannah, incline you to turn card-player likewise?"

"No: I do not think it quite harmless for one of my calling to sanction a frivolous and sometimes a guilty amusement by his practice. He ought to encourage something better. The utmost extent of my liberality will only induce me to tolerate card-playing, under certain circumstances, in others."

On the following morning, Rosina was anxious to revisit all her old haunts. She and Hannah walked down to the White Cottage. "Mary tells me," said Rosina, "that Mrs. Greenway is making a most beautiful *grotter* in the garden, with shells, looking glass, old china and all manner of fine things. I doubt whether I shall think it any great improvement."

"I have my doubts also. She has spoilt your jessamine, which you took so much pains to train over the arbour: and the vine over the kitchen has been so closely trimmed, as to give the house

that awkward look which a person has whose hair has been too closely cut. However, she is such a goodnatured woman and enters with such pleasure into all her little schemes, that it is impossible to be angry with her."

When Betty opened the door and saw Rosina, she could find no variety of language to express her transport, but rather preferred variety of cadence, repeating the same exclamations in every diversity of key. All the family were out, which Rosina was not particularly sorry for; and after a long gossip with Betty, she looked into the dear little parlour where so many happy hours had been spent. All looked much as usual; the furniture and its arrangement remained unaltered, though a miniature seventy-four, which one of the Master Greenways was manufacturing, caused rather an unsightly litter on the floor.

"Master Tom does make such a mess with his ship-building," said Betty, stooping rather crossly to pick up the chips, "that it's impossible to keep the carpit fit to look at; and it's just the same, whoever happens to call; but his mamma does n't mind it, so *I* must say nothing."

While Hannah was talking to Betty about ducks and chickens, Rosina ran round the garden. The grotto was as tasteless a concern as she had expected it to be; there were bows and arrows on

the grass plot, and a target was set up against the walnut tree, that walnut tree beneath which Huntley's easel had stood, and Hannah's raspberries had been eaten, and Lewis Pennington had drank tea with them for the first time, and Matthew and Sam Good had quizzed their masquerade dresses, and Rosina had seen Huntley kiss the flowers which Hannah had thrown away, and Lewis's parting letter had been read. How many careless repartees had been made, how many cheerful hours had been spent, beneath that tree. Hannah and Betty joined Rosina before half her meditations were expended, and began to remark on the fine crop of walnuts there would be this year. Before they returned to the village, they called on Henry Neale, the poor lame boy, and Hannah afterwards took her sister to the village school.

In the evening there was quite a roomful of company at Mrs. Greenway's, to meet the bride and bridegroom. Mr. and Mrs. Good, Matthew and Harry, Sam Good, the two eldest Miss Hollands, Lady Worral, the lieutenant and his wife, and one or two friends from Heeley completed the party. There was a card table for Lady Worral, and the rest entertained themselves with conversation and music. Sam Good devoted himself to Rosina throughout the evening, for she was not

only " a good pretty girl," but " a good fortune," and Rosina, diverted with his oddnesses, was not half so much annoyed by his attentions as she had been in humbler days. The evening passed off pleasantly; it was nothing, however, to the dear familiar communion of heart and mind which distinguished the quiet evenings afterwards spent at the vicarage. Rosina seemed never to have appreciated her sister and Mr. Russell before, and there was nothing to wish for, but that these evenings of happiness could have been shared by her mother. There is always something still to wish—something which we hope futurity will bring us, whatever else it may take away; and it is fortunate that it is so, for otherwise we should behold present happiness fleeting from us with dismay, and discern in the mist before us nothing but dreary shadows of regret, bereavement, and death. Rosina's time now passed in the manner most congenial to her taste, and at the same time, most conducive to her improvement. For an hour or two every morning, Mr. Russell left the sisters to themselves, and either wrote in his study, or visited his parishioners. Hannah, meanwhile, superintended her *menage*, attended to her flowers, or went with Rosina into the village. She seldom returned without spending half an hour at the school. Mr. Russell was now ready to join them

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in a longer walk, or to read to them while they worked; and whichever plan was pursued before dinner, the other came after it. A stroll in the garden always preceded tea; and as the days were now rapidly shortening, a long uninterrupted evening ensued, occupied in reading, needlework, drawing, and conversation, occasionally varied by music or a game at chess. As the lieutenant's wife was not musical, she had willingly given up the piano for Rosina's use; and Matthew sometimes brought his flute. Rosina's affluence now allowed her to put in execution many little plans for the benefit of her humble friends which she had meditated in her days of poverty. At her expense, Assheton's map of Palestine was purchased, and hung up in the schoolroom: useful books were given to industrious scholars of a literary turn; a mangle was bought for Widow Hatcher, and an easy chair for Henry Neale. Poor Henry was rapidly falling a victim to consumption; and his greatest comfort was in the frequent visits which he received from Mr. and Mrs. Russell. Hannah and Rosina carried him almost daily some little delicacy which they had themselves made, to tempt his sickly appetite. Among their innocent pleasures, that of doing good was not the least; and when, towards the close of October, Rosina quitted her beloved sister,

it was with the gratifying conviction that she left her in the station best fitted to mature her virtues in this world, and prepare her for perfect happiness in the next. When Rosina changed the picture and imagined Hannah the wife of Huntley, living in some half-genteel street amid the smoke and uproar of London, forced to maintain an elegant appearance on insufficient means, trembling to find herself on the verge of debt, surrounded by acquaintance either coldly civil or dangerously admiring, uncertain of the wavering affections of a volatile husband, and exposed to the violence of his unrestrained temper,—removed from the protecting eye of a mother, the sympathy of a sister, the grateful affection of a cherished peasantry,—her servants the unprincipled, unattachable, pilfering wretches that wander from place to place,—her amusements the theatre, or a close, heated room full of company,—her duties, to watch hour after hour in expectation of a husband's return from a gay supper, and to hide under a smiling face, a breaking heart,—Rosina could pursue the picture no further; and she breathed a silent but deep thanksgiving that Hannah's happiness had not been raised on so tottering a basis; but that her fate was indissolubly united with that of one whose glory and pleasure would always be to accompany her along the path of retired virtue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

HANNAH's happiness formed the theme of many an interesting conversation, on Rosina's return. Mrs. Wellford looked forward with pleasure to the time when she should witness it herself; but that time did not appear to be immediately at hand. James Parkinson had returned to Park Place, and she did not choose to leave Rosina exposed to his alternate fits of rudeness and admiration. Luckily, his sporting pursuits kept him out of doors the greater part of the day; but his evenings were still without occupation, nor was his conversation such as to be either edifying or agreeable to a modest, sensible girl of eighteen. The Penningtons had returned to the rectory; and scarcely a day passed, part of which was not spent together by Rosina, Sophy, and Marianne. Lewis continued to shut himself up with his law books, but he could hardly pass half an hour with his family without hearing Rosina's praises echoed from one to

another. "How Rosina's mind improves!" said Mrs. Pennington. "Her sprightliness is now tempered by reflection and good sense." "That girl's wit," quoth the doctor, "reminds me of the householder in holy writ. She brings forth from the treasury of her brain things new and old."—"Rosina is very anxious to be of service to the poor," observed Marianne; "she was complaining to me that she feared it would be a long time before they would acquire the habit of telling her all their little trials and grievances as they did at Summerfield."—"Only think of Rosina's reading Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying on a *week-day!*" cried Sophy laughing, "and that, not for Mrs. Wellford's edification but for her own amusement!"—"Oh, she reads, and reflects too, more seriously than you would think, since her last visit to Summerfield," said Isabella. "Flowers equally cover the surface," said Marianne, "but there is buried treasure underneath, and quick eyes can see that the ground has been broken."—"Rosina went with me to-day to fly my kite," said George. "Rosina has taught me how to net a purse," said Clara.

All these eulogiums were apparently heard by Lewis with neither pleasure nor indifference, but with something of weariness and irritation. "I suppose I may go on reading to you," said he to

Marianne one day, "when you have finished ringing the changes on Rosina's perfections."

"Why, Lewis!" said she, "you surely are not displeased, are you, at her being amiable?"

"Quite the reverse," replied Lewis, with a slight degree of irony, "I only beg leave to differ from the general opinion of her being quite faultless."

"Nobody is that," said Marianne, "but pray, to what particular fault are you alluding now?"

"Not to a *particular* fault at all," said he. "Unfortunately it is too common to be particular."

"Well, tell me what it is, at all events," said Marianne impatiently.

"Merely that of giving encouragement to a puppy and a fool."

"Whom can you mean? Mr. James Parkinson? My dear Lewis, she cannot bear the man."

"So it seems, by his name occurring to you directly."

"*That* was because he is the only person of her acquaintance to whom your epithets apply."

"I am not so certain of that," said Lewis thoughtfully.

"But I can assure you," reiterated Marianne, "that Rosina detests him."

"Why then did she return from Summerfield?"

"Because he sent no notice of his coming, and

only arrived the night before she did. Mrs. Wellford said to mamma that if there had been time, she should have written to Rosina to desire her to remain with Mr. and Mrs. Russell."

"Mrs. Wellford thought, then, that Parkinson *might* make himself too agreeable."

"Who can be too agreeable who is never agreeable at all?"

"De gustibus non est disputandum. Why, if Rosina dislikes him, does she afford him so much of her company and conversation?"

"He is her uncle's guest. She cannot help it."

"But she might treat him with more distance."

"Not without vexing Mr. Parkinson. Besides, he worries her into arguments."

"She is very weak to let herself be worried by such a blockhead. At any rate, she need not ride with him."

"She *must* ride with him when he chooses to be of the party, or else give up horse exercise altogether, which would be a great punishment to her and vex Mr. Parkinson."

"Yes, and some of these days, she *must* marry this consummate dolt, or else give up her fortune altogether, which would be a great punishment to her and vex Mr. Parkinson."

"You *know* you are unjust. Rosina is governed by her own judgement in great things, and by the taste of others in trifles. However, I am not sorry to see you a little jealous."

"Jealous!" cried Lewis in high disdain, "I wonder what ridiculous passion you will attribute to me next! I suppose you will presently tell me I am in love!" And with a laugh which was meant to be very careless, he left the room.

That very same evening, Rosina came with some dried plants for Marianne, which Hannah had sent her from Summerfield. She was pressed to stay to tea, and after a little hesitation, consented. A servant was dispatched to inform Mrs. Wellford, and Marianne relieved her friend of her shawl and bonnet.

"So Mr. James Parkinson is with you still," said Sophy.

"Oh, yes," said Rosina, laughing as she carelessly arranged her ringlets at the pier glass, "but the charming youth is about to rob us of the inestimable benefit of his society, for shooting and acting are the two occupations which divide his affections, and a friend in Warwickshire has invited him to some private theatricals. He leaves us to-morrow."

"Indeed! You will miss him, shall not you?"

"Yes—from my elbow at breakfast time. When

I behold him, day after day, occupying Hannah's wonted seat, I can hardly help exclaiming, like the king of the Gepidæ, 'How dear is that place! —how detested that person!'"

Lewis's face brightened. "The difference between your companions must have been sensibly felt," said he.

"You cannot imagine to what a degree," said Rosina. "Even their silence was as far opposed as light and darkness—one originating in having much to think, the other in having nothing to say. Judge then, of the difference between their conversation! Of *him*, you may say, almost in the words of Romeo, 'he speaks—*yet he says nothing.*'"

"Cleverly applied, Rosina," said Dr. Pennington, laughing.

"Do you know, Rosina, what play Mr. James Parkinson is going to act?" said George.

"No, George, I do not. I think, however, he mentioned Cato or Coriolanus. I really cannot recollect which."

"I was reading about Cato to-day," said George. "I should like to see that play. Should not you?"

"I dare say I should be pleased with any play, for I have never seen one."

"Never seen a play," cried Isabella.

"Never seen a play!" cried Clara; and immediately she and George retired to a corner where they held a conference in whispers.

Lewis was in uncommonly good spirits this evening, and took so much pains to please, that not only Rosina, but his sisters were charmed with him.

Music was proposed after tea. Sophy, who had taken lessons of a fashionable master during the spring, had a brilliant voice, and great power of execution, though she wanted feeling. Her sisters were able to take inferior parts. Lewis did not know a note of music, and would not confess being a singer, but as a bass is very desirable, his sisters had drummed into him several glees and quartettes, in which he could acquit himself very creditably. It was proposed that as they mustered so strongly on this evening, they should perform some of the beautiful choruses and quintettes in La Clemenza di Tito. They commenced with "O Dei, che smania e questa!" Rosina was Sesto, and Sophy, Vitellia.

"That is music 'married to immortal verse,'" said Lewis, when they had concluded. "Mozart and Metastasio deserve one another. Mozart can indeed rise much higher, but Metastasio equals him in delicacy. What can be finer than the gra-

dations of feeling, both in music and poetry, in that opening recitative? As to Il Don Giovanni, I cannot forgive Mozart for dragging such a paltry worn out plot into immortality by linking it with his glorious music. It is as unsightly an union as that which the tyrant Mezentius made by chaining a dead and a living body together."

"Notwithstanding which, you must let me sing my favourite 'Batti, batti, oh bel Masetto,'" said Sophy.

"Your favourite, because you are conscious of singing it well," said Lewis; and he gave a ridiculous translation of the words.

Rosina had seldom passed a happier evening. A servant was sent for her at eleven o'clock, and Lewis walked with her through the park. It was a clear starlight night; not a breath of air disturbed the trees which threw their long dark branches over their heads. John followed at a convenient distance; and if Lewis had still been a lover, never could he hope for a more propitious opportunity for pleading his suit; yet he allowed it to pass unimproved, and preferred speaking of the beauty of the night, the study of astronomy, Captain Parry's observations, the northern lights, and the various phenomena of the polar regions. A freezing subject for a lover to have selected, it must be confessed, yet Rosina did not find it un-

interesting. She asked him the names of several stars, and once or twice they came to a full stop. At length, Lewis descended from celestial to terrestrial bodies, and began to criticize the characters of certain persons of their acquaintance. Rosina and he were not of the same opinion with respect to Sir Robert Bosanquet. Lewis considered his mind of an inferior order, and his good qualities disgraced by frivolity and foppery. Rosina gave him credit for talent, and thought his dandyism only assumed for the sake of amusing his acquaintance.

"But what a contemptible application of talent, if talent he has!" cried Lewis.

"He is very entertaining," said Rosina. "But you, Lewis, aspire to grander things. We are soon to lose you, I hear."

"Yes, I shall go to town as soon as the term commences."

"And do you really find the law entertaining?"

"Entertaining! No. But every man should have a profession. If we were always thinking of entertainment, we should soon sink to the level of brutes."

"You draw that conclusion, I suppose, from the inscription on the stable yard of the King's Head, 'Entertainment for man and horse.'"

"No; it is the result of much reflection, I assure you."

Lewis wished her good evening when they reached the portico, and walked home rather gravely.

The next morning, he was passing through the shrubbery, when he heard laughter and lively voices in the adjoining path, and almost immediately encountered Marianne and Mademoiselle Mackau.

"Oh! here he is," cried Marianne, "Lewis!—" But perceiving, or fancying she perceived, that he looked more serious than usual, she turned away with a laugh, saying, "You may ask him, Mademoiselle, for I am sure I shall not," and ran off.

"What is this mighty matter?" said Lewis, looking surprised.

"The mighty matter," replied Mademoiselle gaily in French, "is that poor Clara has set her heart on our asking you a favour which Marianne is sure so grave a student will not grant. The fact is, that the children have amused themselves with learning one of Madame de Genlis's little plays, in which I have encouraged them for the improvement of their French; and as Rosina said last night that she had never seen a play of any kind, George and Clara have conceived the idea

of inviting her to the representation. Unfortunately there is one character unfilled—that of a *papa*, which the children are very anxious that you should undertake; but Marianne says you will think it too childish and sentimental, and—"

"Is that all?" said Lewis, clearing his brow, "give me the book, Mademoiselle; I will undertake it with pleasure."

"Ah, you are the most goodnatured person in the world," said she with delight, "you have no pride nor affectation about you, none at all!"

"Childish? Who would not be a child?" pursued Lewis, turning over the leaves of the play—

> 'Childhood! happiest stage of life,
> Free from trouble, free from strife!'

—When is the representation to take place, Mademoiselle?"

"This evening, if you are ready with your part—"

"This evening! My dear Mademoiselle!—"

"Oh, you will appear but once, and have only seven speeches. Any schoolboy could learn them in two hours."

"And how are the other characters to be cast?"

"Marianne sera votre fille ainée, Clara et

George les deux enfans, Sophie la femme de chambre—"

"And the lady to whom I shall have the honour of playing husband?—"

"Moi-même," said Mademoiselle, with a curtsey and a smile.

"Oh, very well," said Lewis gaily, "nothing could be better. The whole affair charms me excessively. I would not disappoint sweet little Clara for the world. It really was uncommonly goodnatured of the children to think of Rosina. Which is the green-room? My mother's room, I suppose. I will learn my part instanter, and attend the rehearsal before dinner."

Mademoiselle renewed her thanks, and returned to the house to communicate the welcome intelligence, while Lewis remained in the shrubbery to con his seven speeches with a feeling of benevolence and complacence at his heart which many a theatrical amateur might have envied.

Soon after dinner, Rosina received an embassy from the rectory, consisting of George and Clara, who informed her with faces full of importance that they wanted her to drink tea with them that night *very particularly indeed;* and Clara added, with rather conscious looks, that her mother had desired her to say she should be happy to see Mrs. Wellford and Mr. Parkinson. The invitation

was accepted; and as there was evidently a secret in the case, Rosina amused the young Penningtons by appearing very anxious to discover it. They found the family, contrary to custom, sitting in the library, but nothing else hinted that any thing remarkable was going forward, except certain intelligent smiles and glances. After tea, however, all the young people, except Isabella, unaccountably disappeared, and the secret was soon unfolded when Clara entered with a basketful of neatly-written play-bills, which she handed round to the company. They now adjourned to the drawing-room, the prompter's bell announced the commencement of the performance, and the folding doors were thrown open. The first scene was well performed between Sophy, Clara, and George, the first of whom made a capital waiting-maid. Clara delivered her speeches admirably, and it could only be objected to her that she looked very red. George had more courage, but was less perfect, and troubled with a cough whenever his memory failed him. As to Marianne, she would have creditably sustained her character as heroine of the piece, had it not been for a constant propensity to laugh, which rather spoilt the effect of some of her pathetic speeches. But now, all eyes were fixed on Lewis and Mademoiselle Mackau. She, in dress and manner,

the perfect beau-ideal of a marchioness of the *vieille cour;* her acting perfect, neither insipid nor overcharged: *he,* the drollest representative of a sentimental French father that could be imagined. On reading over his part, Lewis had in vain sought for any point in his seven speeches, and discovered that they were mere dissertations of very flimsy morality. It immediately struck him that he could make them highly humourous by pretending to give them the most solemn effect: and to this purpose, he now assumed a languishing, sentimental air, and delivered his sententious aphorisms with an exaggerated pathos which was irresistibly ludicrous. Dr. Pennington laughed till the tears stood in his eyes; Mr. Parkinson, who only heard one word in ten and understood one in twenty, good-naturedly clapped when every one seemed most diverted. Mademoiselle, though unprepared for the trick, was not put out, and maintained her self-possession admirably, while a smiling display of her pearl-white teeth shewed that she was fully aware of the ridicule of the scene. At length, the marquis and marchioness withdrew hand in hand, he gallanting her along as we may see the Will Honeycombs of Queen Anne's days represented in old prints of the Mall in St. James's Park—the doors closed, the performers reappeared in their own characters, and

as their spirits were in need of some field on which to work off their superfluous excitement, they proposed concluding the evening with a dance. Lewis instantly secured Rosina's hand; the girls stood up together, and as a quadrille could not be made up without Mademoiselle's assistance, Mrs. Pennington offered her services as musician. Every one was sorry when her fingers, not very frequently called into practice, became too stiff to play any longer. Rosina went home with a light heart; Lewis's conduct towards her during the last two evenings had been marked by a desire of pleasing, very different from his boyish devotion of manner at Summerfield, and still more different from his cool friendliness since his return from the continent. He had acknowledged that he was sorry that he was going to town, and had hinted that he should only eat the requisite number of dinners and then return to pursue his studies at home. While meditating his various excellencies, his sweetness of temper, his rectitude of principle, and his pleasing manners, Rosina fell asleep.

Now that James Parkinson had fairly gone, without leaving any immediate prospect of his return, Mrs. Wellford resolved to avail herself of Hannah's and Mr. Russell's repeated invitations. Lewis and two of his sisters called at Park Place

on the day preceding that which she had fixed on for her journey. Rosina, who had been riding with her uncle, came in towards the conclusion of their visit. Sophy and Isabella immediately began to tell her of an accident that had happened to one of the Miss Sewards; and she only caught snatches of what passed between her mother and Lewis. They were speaking of Hannah, and Mrs. Wellford was rejoicing in her being settled, for life, in the country. She said she earnestly hoped that *both* her daughters would always live in the country, and that her wishes, on this subject, had always been more earnest on Rosina's account than on Hannah's. Lewis observed, that he was not surprised to hear her say so.

Rosina, of course, missed her mother very much, but she had now a well-spring of happiness at her heart, the source of which she was not very anxious to trace. Mrs. Pennington said, "You must be very dull, Rosina, now that you are left to yourself—pray let us see you as often as you can come." Rosina did not feel dull, but the invitation was particularly acceptable; and as Sophy had promised to teach her some new French steps, there was always an excuse for going to the rectory. Unluckily, these visits were not productive of all the pleasure that had been anticipated. There was nothing to complain of

in Sophy, or Marianne, or Isabella, or Mrs. Pennington, but Lewis was almost always shut up with his horrid law-books, which seemed to have communicated a portion of their stupidity and mustiness to himself. He was no longer the pleasant young man who had acted the incomparable French marquis, and afterwards danced a Polish mazourka with Sophy. He seemed willingly, nay wilfully, to avoid opportunities of seeing Rosina; and if he did, by any chance, come into the drawing-room while the dancing lessons were going on, he seldom made any more tender inquiry than "I hope Mr. Parkinson is well," or any more brilliant observation than "It seems a fine day."

It was tiresome that he should go to town in this surly humour, yet go he did, and Rosina found her dancing lesson uncommonly uninteresting that morning. As to caring for Lewis more than as a pleasing companion, or loving him more than was his due as a cousin, she was certain she did neither. With regard to the first, it was an unquestionable fact that he was the nicest young man in the county: and, under the second head, —Rosina had high ideas of cousinly affection. Harmony and attachment among relations is so desirable! The sunshine of content which had begun to warm her heart, now gave place to a

stealing drowsiness like that which often clouds over an April landscape, when all is bleak and chilly the moment after we have been hailing the warmth of returning spring. She fancied it was owing to her mother's absence. Hannah's loss had never been so completely felt as now. The proverb says that, " there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Certainly, if a *human* friend is here intended, it does not apply to a *sister*, where the full force of that endearing tie has been felt. Marianne was all to Rosina that a warm-hearted attached friend of congenial tastes and temper could be; but she imperfectly supplied the place of one of those whose

> ——" double bosoms" had " seemed to wear one heart,
> Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise
> Were still together, who turned, as 'twere, in love
> Inseparable."——

Lewis, alone, could have occupied this aching void with the present excitements and fairy anticipations of a passion which, whatever Rosina might fancy to the contrary, she had never yet felt. But he had held back, in pride, or diffidence, or coldness; and Rosina, wounded by his voluntary distance, resolved henceforth to equal him in coolness and composure.

" How happy they are now, at Summerfield!" was often her silent thought, as her uncle dozed

in his arm chair at dusk, and no better amusement offered itself to her than that of fancying the White Cottage, the vicarage, &c., in the fire. November, which passed so heavily with her, was indeed, welcomed by the little party which gathered round Mr. Russell's hearth, as the harbinger of that inclement but hospitable season when domestic intercourse is more keenly and uninterruptedly enjoyed than ever, when the poor man is more closely drawn towards his natural protectors, when distant kinsfolk are gathered round the same Christmas board, when fingers and noses are as red as the holly berries in the church windows, and when the nipping frost without, makes at once our roaring fires and kindly sympathies burn brighter and clearer within. Then too, the joyous urchins come home from school, the weekly dole of coals and soup is distributed, the benevolent country lady has as much pleasure in providing warm garments for her poorer neighbours, as they have in receiving them; the sportsman tells of his day's successes; the pastor expatiates on the text, "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord;" the wife sets her husband's slippers by the fire and sweeps up the hearth as she hears his well known footstep; the children play at "Jack's alive and like to live," unscared by the dread of singed pinafores or burnt fingers; and the lover

reckons, not without reason, on a warm reception from his mistress. Oh! who would forego one of these delights which dear, delightful Winter ushers in? or who would prefer a climate where Christmas and Winter, instead of being indissolubly united, are not even on visiting acquaintance?

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRISTMAS VISITORS.

THE first of December found Mrs. Wellford re-established by the fire side at Park Place. It was now her turn to tell of all the happiness at Summerfield, and of Mr. Russell's charity and cheerfulness, and Hannah's popularity, and Matthew's attention to Anne Greenway, and the handsome manner in which Mr. Smith spoke of Harry; and Lady Worral's activity, and Mrs. Shivers's politeness, and Phœbe Holland's visit to the Browns. Matthew and Harry were to spend their Christmas at Park Place. The Penningtons, likewise, were preparing for visitors. The Ponsonbys and Dr. Knollys were their expected guests, and Lewis was to accompany them. Rosina thought, with a sigh, that she should no longer be needed or missed at the rectory.

In this she was mistaken. The Penningtons were not so much engrossed by their domestic visitants as to have no memory or interest left for others. Rosina was often summoned to share their

cheerful evenings; and Lewis's manner, though no more than friendly, had improved in cordiality. The atmosphere of gaiety and affection around him seemed to have thawed his coldness of heart. To every one else he was cheerful, unrestrained, and attentive: how then, with common observance of family politeness, could he be less to Rosina?

Dr. Knollys was a sensible, clever man of the world, with lively manners and rather an ungraceful figure. He and Isabella seemed to suit each other very well, though as Lewis had observed, there was nothing of the fervour of youthful attachment between them. Mr. Ponsonby was a careless, good-humoured young man of fashion, devotedly fond of his wife, and willing to be on the best of terms with her family. The mornings of these two gentlemen were generally devoted to shooting; their evenings, if not passed in conversation, were generally occupied with music, as one was a good singer, and the other played finely on the violin. Mr. Ponsonby was very proud of his horses, especially of one which he had lately purchased, owning the engaging name of Lucifer. He loved to expatiate on his surprising powers; and summed up the description by saying "He is as black as jet, without a white hair about him, and I don't know a single man in Eng-

land fit to sit him except Copeland and myself."

"An attractive character, certainly," ejaculated Marianne.

"You never knew such a horrid creature," said Mrs. Ponsonby. "I am terrified to death every time Frederick rides him."

"If Frederick can manage him, I should think I could," said Lewis, "for I hope I may say, without vanity, that I am a tolerable horseman."

"Granted," said Mr. Ponsonby, laughing, "but I do not think you could hold in Lucifer."

"I am glad there is no opportunity of his trying the experiment," said Mrs. Ponsonby.

"He will soon have that if he likes, for I sent for Lucifer yesterday."

"I hope Lewis will not be so silly as to think of riding him," said Marianne. "Who will go with me to Park Place?"

Her brother and sisters were ready to accompany her. They found Rosina eagerly reading an invitation card. "Only think!" exclaimed she. "Mrs. Seward is going to give a dance on new year's eve. Have you received invitations?"

"No," said Isabella, "but I dare say we shall find them on our return. We passed the servant."

"Of course you will all go."

"For all, read half. You forget that there are

nine of us, exclusive of the children and Mademoiselle Mackau."

"Six of whom might go in the barouche," interrupted Lewis, "and three in Caroline's chariot."

"Horrible!" cried Sophy. "Think of one's sleeves!"

"Well then, the carriage might go twice. Mrs. Seward's dances are always conducted with such spirit that I am sure no one will like to stay at home. This will be your first ball, will it not, Rosina?"

"Yes—I enjoy the anticipation of it amazingly. There is only one thing which damps my pleasure."

"What can that be?" cried Lewis.

Rosina slightly coloured and laughed. "Only the fear that my dancing will not pass current," said she.

"Is that all? Oh, you need not be afraid!"

"Oh dear, no!" cried Sophy. "There will be many who will not dance so well as you do; and if you still feel that you are not perfect in those French steps, come to me to-morrow and I will give you another lesson. 'La retraite,' when you know it, will stamp your dancing at once, but many people that do not care about distinguishing themselves, and only want to pass muster, glide

about in quadrilles without any steps whatever, and do very well."

"Besides, Rosina," said Lewis, with a careless laugh, "an heiress's steps, you know, are sure to be graceful, even if she is not what you have the happiness of being,—a very good dancer."

"An heiress, Lewis?" repeated Rosina. She looked at him anxiously, but he had risen to shake hands with Mrs. Wellford; and she had not leisure at this moment to pursue a train of rather unpleasant ideas which something in his tone had awakened.

Rosina did not forget to claim her promised dancing lesson the next day. As she approached the rectory, she saw George Pennington and Mrs. Ponsonby's two eldest children amusing themselves by sliding on a small pond which was thickly encrusted with ice; while a nursery maid with a younger child in her arms, watched them lest they should get into any mischief. Towards the stables, a groom was leading out a very spirited black horse, for the inspection of Mr. Ponsonby, Dr. Knollys, and Lewis. Their backs were towards Rosina, who entered the house unnoticed, and proceeded towards the drawing room. Mrs. Ponsonby was laughing very heartily over a book which she held in her hand. "Do join me, Rosina," cried she, "in admiring this precious

album of Marianne's. Was there ever such a selection of subjects! Listen to a few of their titles! 'Observations on the leaf-mining caterpillar.'—'Curious fact concerning the purple-capricorn-beetle.'—'Farmer Gubbins's opinion of gossamer.'—Then comes 'An excellent cheap soup for the poor.'—'Best way of preparing Iceland moss.'—'A copy of verses addressed by Mr. Tom Seward to his sister on her birthday'—and finally, an extract from a sermon!"

"I told you," said Marianne goodhumouredly, "that my album was not meant to lie on a drawing-room table."

Sophy here entered, "Where is Lewis?" said she.

"Gone to admire Lucifer with Frederick and Dr. Knollys," said Mrs. Ponsonby composedly. "I hope he won't break his neck."

"I hope he will not be so absurd as to hazard such a catastrophe," said Marianne, walking to the window.

"I am afraid he will, though," said Sophy, "for Frederick offered him the horse at breakfast time.—I think I shall just go and see after him.—I will not keep you in waiting two minutes, Rosina.—We shall be able to practise 'la retraite' comfortably, now that Frederick and Dr. Knollys are out of the way."

"Pray, Marianne," said Mrs. Ponsonby laughing as Sophy quitted the room, "when shall you consider Lewis old enough to leave off leading strings?"

"There are so few brothers like Lewis," said Marianne, "that I think his sisters may be excused for not wishing him to break his neck."

"But, do you know that all this thought and care of a young man of three and twenty is very likely to make both him and you ridiculous? Now, I will tell you a story of a young man who was entirely spoilt by being made too much of by his sisters. Every syllable is true, I assure you. Did you ever hear of the Beverleys of Stoke Pogeis?"

"No."

"Well, they are a very good family, as well as *of* a very good family; unfortunately, they are *too* good.—I don't mean in a methodistical sense —not what aunt Margaret means when she says 'he's one of your *very good*'—*tout au contraire*, but you will see what I mean, in the sequel. Now there are three daughters and a son—it would have been better for him, poor youth, if he had been an only child, instead of an only son.—He happens to be the youngest; and having had much ill health during his childhood, he became the pet of the family. So strong is the

power of habit, that when this worthy youth attained years of discretion, he—Hark! what noise is that?"

To the confusion and terror of all, a loud scream, or rather chorus of screams arose at this moment from the garden; and Sophy's voice was heard in agony, exclaiming, "Help, help! Lewis will be killed! He is dead!"

Mrs. Ponsonby shrieked and rushed from the room, followed by Marianne and Isabella. Cries and exclamations were heard from various quarters. Rosina attempted to follow, but a sudden numbness seemed to have seized her limbs, and she vainly endeavoured to raise her feet from the ground. After a few minutes' great anguish of mind, she recovered herself a little; and was slowly and with difficulty leaving the room, her heart and temples throbbing so violently that she could scarcely breathe, when a door at the opposite side of the room opened, and Lewis himself entered, as if nothing was the matter!

"Rosina here?" cried he. "Where are they all?"

"Oh, Lewis," said Rosina as soon as she could speak, "are you not hurt?"

"How? By what?" inquired he, with a look of great surprise—"Has any thing happened?

You look very pale. Why should you think I was hurt?"

"We thought you had been thrown from your horse," faultered Rosina. The revulsion of feeling was too great for her self-command, and she burst into tears.

"How could such a mistake have arisen?" said he hastily, "I have been at home all the morning —Tears, Rosina? Tears *for me?*—Good heavens," exclaimed Lewis, dropping her hand, "some accident must have happened to little Lewis Ponsonby."

He ran out of the room, and Rosina at the same moment became convinced of the origin of the mistake. Drying her tears, she hastened into the hall to learn the true state of the case; and a crowd of people ascending the steps, in the midst of whom was Mr. Ponsonby carrying his little boy whom he had just dragged from the water. The rest of the family were pale and hurried, and some of them in tears; and as soon as they entered the house, Mrs. Ponsonby fainted away. Sophy screamed, and Lewis sprang towards her and caught her in his arms. He carried her into the parlour, and Isabella ran for hartshorn, while Rosina sprinkled her face with water. Mrs. Pennington and Mademoiselle were busily

engaged undressing the little boy and putting him into a warm bed, while Dr. Knollys, after prescribing for mother and child, and advising Frederick Ponsonby to change his clothes and drink some hot brandy and water, goodhumouredly assisted Sophy in quieting the youngest of her nephews, who was roaring at the top of his lungs. As soon as Mrs. Ponsonby came to herself, Rosina, whose place was now supplied by Sophy and Isabella, took leave. Lewis was still supporting his sister, but he held out his hand as she passed him, and pressed hers with a look which she would have thought cheaply purchased with half her fortune. She returned home, strongly excited by the events of the morning, and hardly knowing whether they had been productive of most agony or delight.

CHAPTER XX.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

"MARIANNE," said Rosina, in the course of the afternoon, after turning over the leaves of a book for some time without reading it, "why do you hope that I shall always live in the country?"

"Do you not hope so, yourself?" said Mrs. Wellford with surprise. "I thought all your tastes were rural."

"Nevertheless, I dare say I could be very happy in London."

"I dare say you could under certain circumstances!"

"Under what circumstances?"

"Supposing, for instance, that you were happily married to a man who could live no where else, and that your own connexions were settled round you."

"That was just what I was thinking!"

"Part of the supposition, however, you can never expect to be realized. You will be entirely separated from your family, if you ever settle in London—"

"Very true," said Rosina, checking a sigh.

"And I must own, there are several other reasons which make me hope that you will never do so."

"What reasons, mamma?"

"Have you so soon forgotten your *own* reasons which you expressed so eloquently to me on your return from Summerfield, for being thankful that Hannah had not married Mr. Huntley? In my humble judgment, all the objections which you ingeniously found out in her case, apply much more strongly to you."

"Ah,—I thought Hannah's health would not support the loss of country air. I do not imagine it would hurt me."

"We cannot tell about that—but it is the *moral* air of London which I fear might be rather dangerous to one so young, lively, and inexperienced as you are. I should be very sorry to see my artless country girl metamorphosed into a dissipated fine lady."

"My dear mother, I will never be a dissipated fine lady!"

"Softly, Rosina; do not make any rash vows. If you were to marry in a certain sphere, you *must*, in some degree, comply with the usages of those around you, and you might not know exactly where to stop. Those who have been born and bred in the atmosphere of fashion may find it

harmless; but it is more dangerous for those who have spent all the early part of their lives in roaming over hills and dales with 'the mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.' I remember, one of your supposed trials for poor Hannah was a small income. Now, Hannah has always been accustomed to domestic management, which you have not; and would, I think, have been much more likely to make a small income go a great way than you could do."

"A small income I shall never have," observed Rosina.

"Five hundred a year is a very small income in London, my dear, and even supposing your husband has as much of his own, you will be forced to live in a very different style to what you do here—"

"Undoubtedly, mamma! yet we were very happy at Summerfield."

"Pray, do you intend to rob poor Isabella of Dr. Knollys? Or has Lewis been proposing a town life to you?"

"Lewis? I have not exchanged a dozen words with Lewis to-day," said Rosina, colouring. —"I was only talking at random. Something happened to remind me that I had heard you say you should not like me to live in London."

Mrs. Wellford did not endeavour to prolong the

dialogue, for she was expecting her sons. They arrived in the evening, in the midst of a heavy fall of snow. As they were sitting round the fire after tea, Lewis Pennington was announced.

"I could not deny myself the pleasure of just coming round to wish you a merry Christmas," said he.

"You are very good to brave such a snow-drift on our account," said Mr. Parkinson. "Pray draw in your chair. This is what I call seasonable weather.

"How are all at home," said Mrs. Wellford, "after the terrible fright they had this morning?"

"They have hardly recovered from the effects of it yet, ma'am. Caroline has been nervous and languid, and Sophy hysterical, all day. My mother and Mademoiselle Mackau have established themselves by Lewis Ponsonby's bedside, and Frederick is agueish and out of spirits, so that I cannot say much for the gaiety of our Christmas eve. Marianne is the most cheerful of the party. She had fallen into your mistake, Rosina, that *I* was the Lewis who was in danger; and when she discovered her error, and saw that my nephew and godson was safely extricated from the ice, she was hard-hearted enough to rejoice that my fall from a horse had been exchanged for his fall into the water. Was not this barbarous?"

"Very much so," said Rosina, laughing and colouring at the consciousness of being of Marianne's opinion—"but we know that she is very much attached to her little nephew, and therefore must forgive her for being still more attached to her brother. I dare say you are heroic enough to wish that the accident had befallen yourself."

"I might have been heroic enough at the time, but when all is over and has turned out well, one's feelings are apt to lose a little of their magnanimity. I could have compounded for the cold bath, but not for the warm bed in broad daylight."

"You may say so without fear of being thought selfish, Lewis," said Matthew; "for we remember your exploit at the Pleasance."

"Hey? what?" said Mr. Parkinson—"What exploit was that?"

While Mrs. Wellford was stating particulars, Lewis talked without appearing to hear her.

"What a ridiculous scene we presented this morning," said he, "if any body had been at leisure to have laughed at it! Frederick dripping like a water god, with icicles depending from his hair—Dr. Knollys shaking a bunch of keys to quiet a screaming child—Mademoiselle rushing through the vestibule with a warming pan and running against my father with a glass of brandy

in his hand, and Sophy snatching up the boiling water which Ponsonby had ordered, to sprinkle on Caroline's face!"

"Every body was too much frightened to think of the ridiculous."

"Yes, indeed. *You*, Rosina, were as much in need of hartshorn, at one time, as any of them, though you made no fuss, and attracted no attention. I shall never forget—"

What Lewis Pennington would not forget, did not appear, for the conclusion of his sentence stuck in his throat.

"Very well indeed," said Mr. Parkinson, "I hope you did not take cold, Mr. Pennington?"

"*I*, sir? It was Ponsonby who jumped into the water—"

"I mean, to pull out Rosina."

"Oh, that was Anno Domini one; I had quite forgotten all about it—I don't remember whether I caught cold or not—Rosina did, which was of more importance—I must brave the pelting of the pitiless storm. It is shameful of me to leave them to themselves at home when every one is out of sorts."

"Well," said Matthew, when he was gone, "Lewis is a nice, frank, pleasant fellow, though he is not one of your very clever—"

"Not deficient either," said Rosina.

"Oh!" said Matthew, smiling, "I am glad you have come round to my way of thinking."

The snow continued to fall uninterruptedly on Christmas day, and Mrs. Wellford endeavoured to persuade Rosina not to go to church, as she would have to walk some distance, between the carriage and the church door. Rosina did not, however, listen to the dictates of prudence; and she was properly punished by catching a cold, which half a dozen sentences exchanged with Lewis and Marianne could hardly be said to counterbalance. The severity of the weather throughout the Christmas week precluded all visiting between the females of the two families, and Rosina had leisure to digest her imprudence and sundry infallible cures for a cold at one and the same time. To these she submitted with exemplary patience, that she might not be prevented from going to Mrs. Seward's ball. This ball occupied much of her thoughts: a few apprehensions were expressed as to the state of the roads on the ball night, and Rosina breathed many a wish for a change in the weather. There was a change. A hard frost on the night before the ball was succeeded by a rapid thaw. Imagine the state of lanes, carriage-drives, and highways! Mr. Parkinson shook his head when he thought of the midnight return from Wickstead Lodge; but Rosina was too happy in

having got rid of her cold, to have any uneasiness about the matter. The day, notwithstanding every effort to cheat time, was unusually long: her ball dress was finished and laid out on her bed: Matthew and Harry were shut up in the billiard-room; and Mrs. Wellford and Mr. Parkinson were writing letters. She wondered whether Lewis would engage her for the first quadrille, trusted that he meant to do so, but feared that Mr. Tom Seward might be beforehand with him. She took down the first volume of Evelina, established herself before a blazing fire, with her feet on the fender, and occupied herself in studying that unfortunate heroine's misadventures till dinner time.

The toilette hour arrived—that hour, scarcely less charming on the eve of the first ball than the ball itself. Alas! a ball is a miniature portrait of this round ball the world! Who, before entering it, dreams of vexations and *contre-temps?* Of disagreeable partners, or no partners at all? Of being forced to maintain a smiling face when one's gown or one's toes have just been trodden upon? Of half a chair at supper time, and starvation in the midst of plenty?

Rosina was taking her last look in the glass, when she heard wheels rattling and splashing up the carriage road. "Surely," said she to her

abigail, Mrs. Cummings, "that sounds like a post-chaise!"

"Only the carriage, ma'am, I think," said Cummings. "There's no seeing from this window, because of the portico; besides which, the night's as dark as pitch."

"Come, Rosina!" cried Harry, rattling at her door as he ran through the corridor, "every body waiting for you."

"Quite ready," she replied, snatching up her fan and gloves, and running after him. She entered the drawing room; and there beheld—Mr. James Parkinson.

"Faith! I'm come just at the right moment, a'n't I?" cried he. "How d'ye do, Miss Wellford. Upon my honour, I suppose I must n't say any thing to-night about

'Beauty, when unadorned, adorned the most,'

must I?"

Harry laughed at this extremely witty speech.

"I shan't keep you ten minutes," pursued James Parkinson. "I'm a famous hand at dressing quick. How monstrously vexatious it would have been if I had just missed you, would n't it! However I should have rattled after you in my chatterbox, and got to Mrs. Seward's before the end of your first quadrille. This is going to be a

grand splash, I suppose. We shall have a little splash in getting to it, ha! ha! ha! Never mind. Hang the wet! By the by, Miss Wellford, if you're not engaged, may I have the pleasure?"

Rosina, with the awful example of Evelina before her eyes, was forced to accept him, and he then ran off to dress, promising to "be back in less than no time." No sooner was he gone than, as Harry was her sole auditor, she gave utterance to her regret.

"Oh! you tiresome creature," cried she, "how could you hurry me down stairs to see this odious man, and be obliged to accept him for my partner?"

"How did I know that he would ask you," said Harry, "or that you would dislike to dance with him?"

"Have not I told you millions of times that I think him the most disagreeable person in the world?"

"Well, Rosy, I am sorry for it; but why did not you tell him you were engaged?"

"Because it would not have been true."

"But, my dear, I would have danced with you."

"Oh! I must bear it as well as I can, though I wish he were a thousand miles off. So long,

too, as he will doubtless be at his toilette! *He* dress in ten minutes!"

"Come, Rosy, do not be impatient. We shall be in good time yet."

Mr. Parkinson now came in, congratulating himself so complacently on his nephew's arrival that Rosina had no longer the heart to express dissatisfaction. After a delay which to her appeared interminable, Mr. James Parkinson made his appearance.

"As good as my word, you see," said he, shaking hands with his uncle and Mrs. Wellford; "only ten minutes or thereabouts, dressing. Is the carriage waiting? Mrs. Wellford, allow me—Oh, my uncle's beforehand with me. No matter. Miss Rosina, will you do me the pleasure?" And as he handed her through the hall, "*We* know who will be the belle of the room, to-night, don't we?" said he.

Rosina was too much provoked with him to answer, and shrunk into as small a compass as possible, lest he should tread on her white crape frock.

"Here we go!" cried he, drawing up the glass. "'Six precious souls and all agog.'"

"I am sure you may add," said his uncle, "'to dash through thick and thin.'"

"What fun it would be if we were overturned!"

"No great fun to Mr. Parkinson and myself, I think," said Mrs. Wellford, "whatever it might be to younger and gayer people."

"I'll bet you any thing, though, that there 'll be an accident to-night of some kind or other; either an upset or a break down. Come, Miss Wellford, let you and me lay a wager. What shall it be? A dozen of gloves."

"No indeed, I never bet."

"You think it wicked, I suppose," said her tormentor with a laugh.

"I think it is very vulgar."

"There you are mistaken," said he, "for I lost a bet last week to a duke's daughter, and she made me pay it too! What do you think of that now?"

"That it does not alter the case."

"But she was a duke's daughter, I tell you!"

Rosina had no hope of making him understand that a practice sanctioned by a duke's daughter might still be vulgar, and therefore dropped the subject, resolved that so tiresome a companion should not interfere with her pleasurable anticipations. After a ride of three miles which the heaviness of the roads made unusually tedious,

they arrived at the gaily illuminated lodge of Mr. Seward's park.

"Look, Rosina, look," cried Harry, "at the reflection of the coloured lamps in the water!"

"Beautiful! how well thought of! How well managed!"

"Who was it," said Matthew, "who, visiting some celebrated person incognito, found that his disguise was discovered, by seeing his own name in letters of fire under the water?"

"Frederick the Great, I believe," said Rosina.

"A tremendously odd plan," said James Parkinson.

The carriage stopped, and Rosina entered the house in a flutter of delight. After waiting in the tea-room while James Parkinson took some coffee which she thought it was very rude of him to make them wait for, they proceeded to the ball-room, where dancing had already commenced. Rosina presently found herself seated on a form beside her mother, with her partner standing immediately in front, playing with her fan, and telling her that she had made him scald his mouth; —"and all for nothing, for they've got no further than dos-à-dos; and we shan't be able to stand up this half hour. What queer lustres those are on the chimney piece! I should think they've

survived their tenth lustre at the lowest computation! Ha, ha, ha!—You don't understand that jeu d'esprit, Miss Wellford."

"Oh yes, I do. Pray, are the Penningtons come?"

"The Penningtons? I don't see them. There are the Tomkinses. Shall I go and look for the Penningtons?"

"If you please."

"May I have the pleasure of dancing the next quadrille with you, Miss Wellford?" said Sir Robert Bosanquet.

"I am engaged, thank you."

"The second, then."

"The third with me, I hope," said Mr. Seward.

Rosina bowed with resigned acquiescence. She trusted the right partner would come at last.

As the dancers dispersed at the conclusion of the quadrille, a young lady, or rather a lady who *would be* young, tripped across the room with an affected timidity which Rosina thought very amusing, and took possession of a vacant seat beside her with a great rustling of silk and stiff muslin. Here she played off her pretty airs for some time without exciting much notice: at length, a young lady who was promenading with her partner, stopped for a moment, and said, "Have you been dancing?"

"No," said she, laughing, "I'm waiting for Lewis Pennington."

Waiting for Lewis Pennington! thought Rosina, that is a candid confession at any rate! She could not help bestowing a side glance at the speaker, with more curiosity than she had felt before, and beheld rather a fine looking but very affected woman of two or three and thirty, with a silly, unmeaning smile, and a person loaded with gauzes, gymps, beads, flowers, and ornaments of every description.

If Lewis Pennington is waiting for you, thought Rosina, he must have a very poor taste.

"Since you are waiting for Mr. Pennington, Miss Edgar," said the young lady's partner, "it will be treason for me to propose to you."

"Oh, mine is only a self-imposed vow," replied she in a languishing tone, "I may break it when I like.—Besides, you know, a lady dares not refuse a partner, unless she means to sit out all the evening."

"A lucky regulation for us poor wretches," said the gentleman, "since it puts a stop to picking and choosing. However, as the happy man has just made his appearance, I won't be so malicious as to stand in his way." And with a bow and smile, he walked off, leaving Miss Edgar rather disconsolate.

"The Penningtons are just arrived," said James Parkinson, coming up to Rosina. "Shall we stand up? The set is forming."

"Engaged, I see," said Lewis as she passed him, "but shall we dance the next quadrille together?"

"Still engaged, unfortunately."

"The third, then—"

"Still engaged."

He looked mortified, and was at this moment separated from her by the entrance of fat Mrs. Hooke and her three daughters. The quadrille commenced, and Rosina was too anxious not to disgrace herself and Sophy Pennington by any *faux pas*, to have much leisure for regretting that James Parkinson was her partner. She soon found herself standing up with Sir Robert Bosanquet.

"Have you heard of the accident?" said he carelessly, as he took her fan and began to fan himself with great gentleness.

"No, indeed! What accident?"

"The bridge over Petre brook has been carried away, some say, by the torrent; others think, it was broken down by the weight of Mrs. Hooke. At any rate, its departure is incontestible; it is now among the hath beens, gone to its long home, lost, extinguished, extinct, scattered over all seas

like the Trojans; consequently, all the carriages returning in that direction will have to go round by the lanes."

"How very provoking!"

"D'ye think so? I call it *vay* (very) good fun. The avenue is now in such a condition that the Penningtons have been three quarters of an hour between the house and the lodge, and passed many, more heavily laden, inextricably sunk in the mud. Just like the roads round Waterloo, the day after the battle. I like any thing of this kind — it wakes one up so. A real *country dance*, a ball given in the country, is worth twenty in town, where they're all conducted after the same pattern — where there are the same suppers, the same music, and the same faces. Nothing to entertain one—Weippert sure to be every where. All the women's heads dressed alike. Here there's some variety. I've often wished, at a rout, that the chandelier would tumble down. Just to put a little expression into people's faces. Suppose we coax Mrs. Seward to give us a masquerade. I should like to see how it will pass off in the country. I dare say there would be a good many new characters hit upon by the natives."

"What character do you think you should choose for yourself?"

"Why, I think I would go like a great green poll parrot, as the Frenchman did, to the masquerade which the empress Catharine gave in honour of prince Henry. That would be very good fun. I would clap my wings and chatter amazingly, and make every body laugh. Do you know the Frenchman did all he could to make prince Henry laugh, and could not succeed for the life of him. So at last, when all his wit had failed, he hopped off on one leg, and squeaked into prince Henry's ear, 'Henry, Henry, Henry!' three times, which immediately made him fall into an inextinguishable fit of laughter."

"But you were in hopes that new characters would be invented in the country. Now, the parrot would not be new."

"True, I did not think of that. I would persuade two of the Hookes to come as the children in the wood, and I would be the robin redbreast. But where should I find the leaves? Perhaps we might get up the fox and the stork. There's a famous narrow-necked jar under that table. But I don't like long bills—it's bad enough to pay them, without having to pay for them. Oh, here comes a second detachment of the Penningtons. Mademoiselle Mackau, by all that's charming! Who could have thought of their bringing her? And she looks quite in her element too, and is

bowing and smiling to some of her old admirers with all the ease imaginable!"

"Pray, which are they?"

"Her admirers?—Oh, first, there's Mr. Grantley, the tall saturnine looking man you see leaning against the door. He was *éperdument* in love with mademoiselle, but I don't wonder that she would not have him. Then there's Mr. Belfast, the jolly apothecary. He makes four thousand a year—that would have been a capital catch for her, but she would not have him either. After him stands Dr. Bruin, the little blackish man, who looks as if he had fallen into a bottle of ink some time or other—he who is laughing in the corner. He has long 'wanted a wife to make him *unasy*,' and he thought mademoiselle would suit him exactly, but he too was refused, for no reason on earth that I could ever find, unless she is waiting for Lewis Pennington."

These words reminded Rosina of Miss Edgar. "Can you tell me," said she, "who is the young lady in pink, sitting next but one to mamma?"

"Oh," drawled Sir Robert, "she may in some sort, be said to be waiting for Lewis Pennington too. That's Miss Edgar, of Castle Edgar. She used to be a great flame of his some six or seven years ago, when he was a boy and she a beauty—at that time, she had a great many strings to her

bow, and used to laugh at his 'schoolboy penchant'—but now that all her bow-strings are cracked or lost, she sets her cap at him vigourously, forgetting that now he is no longer a boy, she is no longer a beauty. You know the song of 'Nets and Cages.' Well, Miss Edgar is just in the predicament of Chloe. It won't do. Pennington won't have her. I shall be curious to see how he fights shy."

"Perhaps he may not wish to do so."

"Oh yes, he will—he's one of that moral sort that will never affect what they don't feel; and he'll never think seriously of Miss Edgar."

"Why?"

"Because she's a fortune. Pennington's so mighty disinterested, that he'd rather marry a beggar than an heiress. That's what I call very good fun."

At the conclusion of Rosina's third quadrille she regained her seat between her mother and Miss Edgar, who, notwithstanding her avowed intention of waiting for Lewis, had been dancing with some one else. Lewis might now have crossed the room if he had chosen it, but he seemed to prefer laughing and talking with Tom Seward. At length, as a new set formed, he hastily approached her.

"Now, then—" he began; but a spangled fan was laid upon his arm. The tap of a bailiff could scarcely have been more vexatious.

"A thousand pardons," said he, disentangling his foot from Miss Edgar's scarf.

"See how much mischief you have done!" said she, displaying a rent in the unfortunate gauze. "How lazy you are to-night! What has made you give up dancing? Are you grown too fine?"

"Too idle, I believe, but I have been very well employed as a looker on."

"Well employed, do you call it? I don't call that any employment at all. I am sure it must be shockingly stupid."

"Rosina," cried he abruptly, as he saw her curtsey to a newly introduced partner, "we were engaged, were not we?"

"I fear,—I believe not," said Rosina, correcting herself.

"Are we *never* to dance together?" said Lewis, impatiently.

"Whenever you please."

"The quadrille after this, then. Do not forget."

Rosina shook her head smilingly, as she was led off, and Lewis turned on his heel, leaving Miss Edgar much mortified. A moment after, he re-

turned, and asked her to dance. They accordingly stood up together.

"Quite a family quadrille!" said Sophy, as she passed Rosina in the chaine des dames.

Rosina was enjoying herself very much, and her lightness of heart perhaps gave an additional elasticity to her step; for Sophy whispered in a warning voice "Remember, Rosina!—Glide, if you please."

"What was that awful warning of Sophy's?" inquired Lewis, when Rosina joined him in la pastorale; "I heard her utter the word 'Remember' in as cautionary a tone as if she had been Charles the First."

"Only a prudent hint," said Rosina, "not to let my gaiety run away with my discretion."

"In other words, that you should dance with as dull and inanimate an air as if your thoughts were engaged in solving a problem! What nonsense! And at your first ball, too! Pray, Rosina, take my advice, and—"

He was unable to inform her what that advice was; for Mr. Trotter having finished his pas seul, came to conduct her in a demi chaine Anglaise to her place.

In due time, Lewis had the satisfaction of claiming Rosina's promise.

"Let us secure a good place at once," said he. "I could not bear to see you pushed about among the side couples."

"That accounts for the lugubrious countenance you have worn the greater part of the evening," said Rosina, laughing. "I could not imagine what had made you so unusually grave."

"Was it not enough to make a man look cross, when nobody would dance with him?"

"A serious misfortune indeed. You should have come earlier, and then every body would not have been engaged."

"Who could have thought of your bringing James Parkinson with you? Besides, the broken bridge made us an hour later than we had expected. However, all that is over now, and I can cheerfully sing 'Begone, dull Care.'"

"By the by," said Lewis, when the side couples were dancing, "Sir Robert Bosanquet was very entertaining to-night, was not he?"

"Much as usual: I came out with a firm resolusion to be delighted with every thing and every body."

"And have you enjoyed yourself as much as you expected?"

"Almost. The first part of the evening was rather dull."

"Indeed? I should have thought, at your first ball, you would have found entertainment enough in criticising your neighbours' dress."

"My neighbour? What, Miss Edgar? She is very fine, certainly," said Rosina, laughing.

"Oh! I was not thinking of Miss Edgar. Poor girl!—poor woman, I mean. She often reminds me of that line of Pope's—

'See how the world its votaries rewards!"

—In youth she cared for nothing but dress and admiration; and now that the latter commodity is grown rather scarce, she is obliged to devote a double portion of time and thought to the former. We always pay the penalty of our follies, Rosina, some time or other. Years ago, when I was a boy, I used to profess a great deal more admiration for that girl than I felt, and now it is difficult for me to change my tone. I keep out of her way as much as I can, and was half afraid of approaching you this evening, because you were in such a dangerous vicinity."

"You fell into the syren's toils at last," said Rosina.

"Her silken toils. I entangled my foot in her scarf. As to dancing with her, I asked her of my own accord, I assure you. I felt that I had been rude; and made the amende honorable, not only

by dancing one quadrille with her, but in procuring her a partner for another. Was not that amiable in the highest degree?"

Lewis did not dissolve partnership at the conclusion of the quadrille, but, as he found Rosina did not intend to dance any more before supper, he continued talking to her and Mrs. Wellford, while several couples were waltzing.

"'Suis-moi, c'est l'ordre des dieux!'" said Tom Seward, as he passed on his way to the supper-room.

"You frighten me," said Lewis. "Is there to be a supper served up by ghosts, like that which was given to Count Hoditz?"

Mr. Parkinson came to offer his arm to Mrs. Wellford, and Rosina and Lewis followed in their train.

On their return to the nearly deserted ball-room after supper, they found eight young ladies dancing the Lancers.

"I think, Sir Robert," said Lewis, "the beauty of the quadrille is by no means impaired by the absence of the more awkward sex."

"Very true—now that they've no opportunity of flirting, they've more leisure for grace: but I am afraid, Pennington, you and I have come to spoil sport—I observe a gradual increase of affectation and diminution of *gaieté du cœur*. How

gratifying for you and me to feel that they are now dancing to please *us!* Well, I am sorry it is over. Is there going to be waltzing again? Then I shall go and offer myself to Mademoiselle Mackau."

"With little fear of success, I believe," said Mrs. Wellford, as he walked off.

Rosina was again dancing with Lewis, when she heard her mother tell Mrs. Seward that Mr. Parkinson had gone home with Dr. and Mrs. Pennington.

"My uncle gone?" said she.

"Yes, he had a terrible headache," said Lewis, "and I very magnanimously resigned my place in the carriage to him, so that I must return with you."

Rosina did not seem much displeased at the arrangement. Dr. Knollys soon claimed her for his partner, and as Lewis was, what Miss Edgar had called him, a lazy dancer, he sat down by Mrs. Wellford.

"Lord Collingwood," said he, "pretended that he could guess the characters of ladies from their handwriting. *I* think you may discover a great deal from their dancing. At any rate, when you already know them, your imagination enables you to trace some resemblance between their styles of dancing and of thinking. Look at that girl oppo-

site. She is one of D'Egville's best pupils, and she dances for fame. Nothing can be more finished than her performance; but mark the greediness with which she looks out for admiration! She is 'concentred all in self.' Little Fanny Seward, who stands next to her, glides through the maze with a grace which is natural to her, but with so much quietness that it is evident she holds the even tenor of her way without desiring or aiming at notice. That Miss Hooke in deep mourning is a desperate flirt. She is so bent on captivating her partner that she forgets the figure, and runs hither and thither, looking as puzzled as a *poule mouillée*. How inconsistent are quadrilles and black crape! That girl is in mourning for a sister! She fancies her charming spirits are irresistible. To me they are repulsive in the extreme. However, I do not approve of the sentimental melancholy of Miss Margaret Old either; her eyes are as resolutely bent on the ground as if she believed that those of every one else in the room had no better employment than that of admiring her pretty face. Charlotte Old is far more agreeable: you can see by her energetic pirouettes that she has a little touch of the romp in her: however, she is dancing with her brother, so that is excusable. Rosina presents a perfect combination of grace, cheerfulness, and modesty."

"Come," said Mrs. Wellford, "that confession alone secures you from the scolding I was preparing for you. In endeavouring to support a whimsical theory, you have been rather too satirical."

"Have I? But it is so provoking to see girls take such trouble to make themselves disagreeable, when, if they would but let themselves alone, or take as much pains with their tempers as they do in acquiring *minauderie*, they would form the most agreeable part of the creation."

"Girls would probably abandon affectation if you did not give them reason to think it was agreeable."

"There are fools on both sides," said Lewis. "However, they serve as very good foils to the rest."

Rosina now joined them, and as she did not wish to dance again, it was agreed that they should return as soon as her brother's engagements had terminated. While she was talking with great animation, Lewis's countenance suddenly assumed an absent expression.

"Marianne has been sitting out ever since supper, I think," said he.

"She certainly has," said Mrs. Wellford. "I do not remember to have seen her dancing above twice this evening."

"There is room for her even now in the side set," said Lewis, immediately rising and going towards her. "Marianne," said he, "why don't you dance?"

"Simply," replied she, "because I have not a partner."

"Be old-fashioned, then, for once, and take compassion on me. If we are recognized for brother and sister, it will make the young men properly ashamed of themselves. Come, there is no time to lose." Marianne smiled gratefully, and immediately took his offered arm.

"That is what I call real goodnature," whispered Dr. Knollys to Isabella. "I saw Lewis listening to Miss Wellford with delight at the moment that his eye fell upon Marianne, and he immediately sacrificed his own pleasure to hers."

"No one can have more kindness of heart," said Isabella. "I wonder if his attachment to Rosina will ever come to any thing serious."

"I am inclined to think it will," said Sophy. "No one but a lover would consider Rosina a perfect dancer."

"A shrewd observation, Sophy," said Dr. Knollys, laughing; and he resumed his calculation of the average number of miles danced by each young lady in the course of the evening.

The Wellfords' party quitted the ball at the end of the quadrille.

"Farewell, Wickstead Lodge," said Lewis as they drove off. "One short hour more, and Tom Seward will tread alone

"Your banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but him departed."

"While his mother," said Matthew, "interrupts his reveries on the beauty of his partners by calling to him from the landing place, to—be sure to see that all the candles are put out!"

"And the yawning butler," added Harry, "sleepily counts over the spoons, and the footmen empty the wine glasses to each others' healths."

"What a tremendously cold night it is!" cried James Parkinson, "it's freezing quite hard again. Well, I know I've had a famously pleasant evening. I danced every quadrille. Let me see. First with Miss Seward, then with Miss—"

"First with me, if you please," said Rosina.

"Oh, ay, so it was; I had forgot that. First with you, then; next with Miss Seward, third with Margaret Old, fourth with Jemima Hooke, fifth with Fanny Seward, sixth—"

"What a sweet countenance Fanny Seward has!" observed Rosina.

"Sixth," pursued James, "with Harriett Edgar—"

"Her countenance is the true index of her mind," said Lewis.

"Seventh, with Charlotte Old—"

"Her dress was remarkably pretty," said Rosina.

"Yes—but nothing is so becoming as white," said Lewis.

"Eighth (raising his voice) with Helen Seward —No, I think the eighth was with Sophy Pennington."

"Miss Sophy Pennington," said Lewis.

"Well, there's no harm done, but tell me, one of you, will you, whether I danced the eighth with one of the Sewards or Miss Pennington?"

"I cannot recollect," said Rosina.

"With Miss Seward," said Lewis, shortly.

"No, that it was n't, for if it was any of the Sewards, it was Helen. Oh yes, it was her, I recollect now, because then we went in to supper, and when I came back, they were waltzing. Why, where are we going?"

"Through the lanes," said Mrs. Wellford, "on account of the broken bridge."

"Oh, ay, I recollect now. So you see, Miss Wellford, if you *had* accepted my wager that there would be a break down of some kind, you'd have lost it."

"I have had a fortunate escape then. Pray, be so kind as to draw up the glass, or we shall catch cold."

"By the by, I have n't told any of you yet, of the famous theatricals we had at Hutchinson's. You never knew such fun in your life. First of all, we were going to have Romeo and Juliet, and I offered to play Mercutio, but there were too many characters in that; and besides, none of the ladies would play the nurse. So then we agreed we'd have She Stoops to Conquer. *I* wanted to be either Hastings or young Marlow.—However, they put me off with the landlord of the Three Pigeons, which was not over civil; but as I often say, every body can't have the best part. In dining off a chicken, you know, some must have the wings, and some the legs, and some the back. Ha, ha, ha!—I did n't much care for it, for Kate Hutchinson, who was to play the heroine, was tremendously ugly, and Stafford Smyth and young Hutchinson, both wanted to be Marlow, and came at last to such high words that I expected they would fight."

"Pleasant," said Matthew.

"I suppose you had enough to do to reconcile them," said Harry.

"Not I, I thank you: it served them right for

making me be landlord of the Three Pigeons. However, it was settled at last by a change of characters between the ladies, who had been quarrelling too; and as all Staff wanted was to carry on a flirtation with the youngest Miss Hutchinson, he no sooner found that she was to be Constance Neville, instead of Miss Hardcastle, than he was contented to play Hastings."

"That set all right, I suppose," said Matthew.

"Why, yes, in some measure; and then came the rehearsals, which were capital fun:—though there was a good deal of squabbling to the last; and the day after the representation, Staff and Susan Hutchinson set off to Gretna Green."

"An appropriate after-piece," observed Lewis.

"I was tremendously glad they did n't go off a day sooner, for it would have been provoking if they had spoiled the play. I was in Staff's confidence, and we mutually agreed we would n't spoil sport. Why, how miserably John drives! We're all on a slope. I think he must be drunk. Where are we going?"

"Down, derry down," cried Harry, hastily, and in another moment the carriage was overturned. The lane being extremely narrow, with steep banks on either side, it was not completely horizontalized, but only placed so much on a slant as

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"Your thin slippers will be saturated with water," cried he. "What can be done? Will you stand upon my hat?"

"No, indeed!—Pray, Lewis, do not stand uncovered in such weather as this!—Your cloak too—"

"I insist on your wearing it—"

"Then let mamma share it with me; I am sure it is large enough for both."

"You will look like Paul and Virginia; two faces under one hood. But do as you like.—Here comes John over the hedge. What have *you* been about, John?"

"I'm sure, sir, I'm as vexed as you can be," said the crest-fallen coachman, limping to the scene of action; "and a pretty deal more hurt," he added, sotto voce.

"Here comes another carriage," said Mrs. Wellford.

"What is the matter?" cried fat Mrs. Hooke, putting forth her head, with a cambric handkerchief to her mouth.

"Mr. Parkinson's carriage stops the way, ma'am."

"A break down? An upset? Mercy on us! I hope our turn won't come next."

"No knowing—every one has his ups and downs in this world."

"Timothy, do take my compliments to Mrs. Wellford, and tell her I sadly fear she'll catch cold. Oh; they've set the carriage up again, have they? How noisy those young men are! To think of their joking at such a crisis as this. Timothy, tell coachman that if he overturns me, I'll turn him away to-morrow. There's no knowing what the consequences of such an accident might be to a woman of my age."

Lewis had announced that "all was right," and every one had resumed their places. Now that all was over, the affair did very well to laugh at. It reminded Rosina of those moonlight misadventures, on returning from country assemblies, so pathetically detailed in Mrs. Montagu's correspondence.

"I hope, Mrs. Wellford, I did n't break any of your ribs when I trod upon you!" cried James Parkinson with a loud laugh.

"You were quite right, Parkinson," said Lewis, "not to let Mrs. Wellford's or any one else's ribs stand in your way. Let every man do the best he can for himself! An excellent maxim!—and then every one is sure to be taken care of!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DAY AFTER THE BALL.

THE next morning, Sophy and Marianne came to talk over the ball with Rosina.

"My dear creature, how are you after that odious overturn?" cried Sophy. "Were not you dreadfully frightened?"

"Oh no! Before I had time to be frightened, the worst was over. No evil resulted from it beyond the breaking of one of the windows, and a bruise on mamma's hand, owing to James Parkinson's trampling on it so unmercifully. He cut his cheek, too, with the broken glass, which served him right. Mamma is thankful that no worse accident happened, my uncle is glad he escaped it, and Matthew, Harry, and I have enjoyed a hearty laugh over the whole affair."

"Well, Rosina, were not you charmed with the ball? I think you danced almost every quadrille. As you are my pupil, I must tell you that your dancing was much admired, though you fell off terribly, my dear, in 'la retraite.' I was quite

mortified, I assure you, for I had been boasting of your proficiency to Sir Robert Bosanquet, and when we were both watching you in the 'avancer et retirer,' you shuffled along as if your feet were glued to the ground. Imagine my disappointment!"

"But never mind," interposed Marianne, "for when Sophy was complaining of you this morning at breakfast, Lewis and Dr. Knollys united in declaring that if you had displayed more assurance, they should have admired you less."

"I am much obliged to them," said Rosina, "but I had no idea that my dancing excited so much attention; and if I had, I am sure it would have spoilt the pleasure of my evening."

"Oh, unquestionably," said Sophy. "Only think of my good luck in dancing twice with Sir Robert Bosanquet! And how well the supper was managed! I heard old Mrs. Trotter, who always finds something to grumble at, complaining that there were no almond cakes. A plain proof, thought I, that every thing else is to be had!"

"Papa and Mr. Grantley," said Marianne, "had a tough encounter, as usual. The rock on which they split last night, was the state of modern society. Mr. Grantley objected to the dangerous effect of dissipation on the minds of young people,

and said the French plan was much the best, of keeping girls in seclusion till they married, by which time their minds might be supposed sufficiently formed to encounter the intoxicating atmosphere of gaiety and admiration without injury. Papa differed from him, as he always does, and maintained that recreations which were natural and allowable in youth, were inconsistent with the becoming tastes and duties of a wife and a mother. They contested the point very warmly, and I thought that papa had the best of the argument."

"I am glad Mademoiselle Mackau would not marry that horrid man," said Sophy. "By the by, Rosina, we are going to lose Mademoiselle. She always pays an annual visit to some old friends in town, and she is going to accompany the Ponsonbys."

"And when do they leave you?"

"To-morrow, alas! Dr. Knollys leaves us too. How dull we shall be!"

"We shall be dull also, for Matthew and Harry will return to Summerfield this afternoon. However, to counterbalance the misfortune, Mr. James Parkinson leaves us to-morrow. There is some new actress come out, whom he is dying to see."

"Well, the best thing you can do to-morrow

evening will be to come and drink tea with us, and then we can bestow our dullness on each other. Exchange is no robbery, you know. We will practise the Mazourka, or teach Lewis a new glee, or make him read a French play to us. Be sure to come."

Rosina would not promise; because her uncle was not very well, and she did not think it would be quite fair to leave him.

The following day was a busy day at the rectory. The bustle of packing up which preceded the departure of the travellers was almost equalled by that of the various re-arrangements which succeeded it. Sophy and Marianne resumed possession of their own room; Mrs. Pennington's parlour which had lately been a day nursery, was restored to its original denomination and a comparative degree of neatness; and so much was to be altered and set to rights, that it was not till the diminished party assembled at dinner that they felt the dreary extent of their loss.

"Heigho!" said the doctor, leaning back in his chair and drumming on the table when the cloth was removed. "I know I miss Ma'mselle Mackau. What is come to you all? You are uncommonly dull and quiet, and if I start a subject, you let it drop immediately."

"I believe, sir," said Lewis, "we each talk as

much as usual, only, from so many of the dramatis personæ being absent, the chasms which they would have filled up present rather a melancholy blank."

"But you *don't* talk as much as usual," insisted the doctor, "there were none of these chasms, as you call them, before the Ponsonbys arrived. Come, draw round the fire, all of ye, that I may not see such an awful superabundance of room at this great dining table; and contract the semicircle till we all have our feet just without the shadow of the fender. Fill my glass, Lewis."

"I am sure," said Clara, "I miss little Lewis and Charles, though they *were* rather troublesome sometimes."

"And I miss Dr. Knollys," said Sophy.

"And I miss Frederick," said Lewis.

"And I miss Caroline," said Mrs. Pennington.

"Don't *you* miss any body, Bell?" said the doctor.

"A little, papa," said Isabella with a smile.

"What a foolish person that was," cried Marianne, "who said the heart is only large enough to hold one friend! I am sure mine has as many little nooks for those I love as there are cells in a honey comb."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear," said the doctor. "I like a woman to have a great

capacity of loving; and the wider the circle of her affection extends, the better, though it should burn brightest in the centre."

"Like a lamp, papa, which while its heat is confined to a very small space, diffuses light and cheerfulness over a large room."

"I hardly know," said Sophy, "whether the pleasure of meeting one's friends is not overbalanced by the pain of parting from them."

"I am sure it is not," said Mrs. Pennington, "any more than the advantage we derive from daylight is counterbalanced by the ensuing darkness."

"And we all know," said Dr. Pennington, "that Milton, in describing the celestial region where separation and darkness are supposed to be done away with, is forced to imagine that

> 'They too, have their evening and their morn,
> For change delectable.'"

A pause ensued, which no one seemed very eager to interrupt. It was broken, at length, by a soft tap at the door. Rosina immediately entered, shrouded in the folds of a heavy cloak.

"May I come in?" said she gaily. "How snug and comfortable you all look!"

"Rosina! This is an unexpected pleasure," said Lewis starting from his seat.

"How glad I am that you have been better than your word!" cried Sophy.

"I have only come round for a short half hour. I promised my uncle that I would return to tea."

"I dare say he will forgive you if you forget your promise," said Isabella.

"I dare say he would, but he is so good natured that I should not forgive myself."

"That's right, my dear Rosy," said the doctor. "A girl that makes such a dutiful niece to an old man, promises fair to make a dutiful wife to a young one."

"You have timed your visit very seasonably," said Mrs. Pennington, "for we were all rather doleful at the loss of our visitors."

"Doleful?" repeated her husband. "I'm as melancholy as the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe."

"Now, then, you know how *I* felt when I lost Hannah," said Rosina, establishing herself at the doctor's side.

"Pshaw! you only lost one, and we have lost half a dozen."

"But I loved the one as dearly as you can love the half dozen."

"That can't be proved; and what is the love of a sister, I should like to know, compared to that of a father?"

"Hannah and I were very romantically attached."

"Yes, yes, all young ladies are romantic."

"I don't think romantic people are to be envied," said Isabella, "they are liable to so many imaginary torments."

"That," said Lewis, "is when they indulge romantic expectations, without practising romantic virtues. Heroism, generosity, self denial, good temper, and unalterable constancy, are the characteristics of heroes and heroines of romance. Where, in real life, would not these virtues secure the largest portion of happiness? Unfortunately, the term romantic is misapplied to the man who expects to find a Pylades among his schoolfellows, and the spirit of Leonidas's followers in a modern mob;—or to the girl whose absurd vanity encourages her to believe, that her beauty is to set the world in arms. The French *beau monde*, you know, is at present divided into Classicists and Romanticists. I avow myself a Romanticist, according to my own acceptation of the term; and I trust my admiration of the romantic virtues is not likely to interfere with the quieter duties of this working-day world."

"You will find such virtues insisted on, however, no where but in a romance," said Isabella.

"Then the Bible is a romance, and St. Paul a visionary, when he expatiates on the qualities of charity. If men and women would only have that

chapter *by heart*—that is, *in* their hearts, and in their heads every day and all day long, what a blessed world this would be!"

"Yes," said Rosina, "it would be peopled with Hannahs and Mr. Russells."

"I like Lewis's admiration of romantic virtues very well," said his father, "and believe, with him, that they are perfectly compatible with every-day duties. The only mischief is, that young people, dazzled with striking instances of heroism and beneficence, are apt to wait in idleness for opportunities of signalizing themselves in similar cases, disdaining, or disgusted with that regular but unobtrusive species of moral defence, which, like the Chinese wall, is destitute of sufficient grandeur to attract the eye, yet is interminable in length, and surmounts all obstacles—stooping to the valley as well as scaling the mountains, and crossing the brook as well as the river."

Half an hour, nay, three quarters flew by, while Lewis could hardly persuade himself that Rosina's visit had lasted ten minutes. Comparison of watches confirmed the unwelcome truth. At any rate, there was no reason why he should not see her home. The stars were very bright: this evening, however, he steered clear of the North Pole.

"I perfectly agree with you, Rosina," said he,

" in your estimation of Hannah and Mr. Russell. What blessings they must be to Summerfield! If I were to change identity with any one, it should be with Russell; though his quiet, sober ways of acting and thinking are—not much like my own. I was nearly saying *uncongenial* to my own; but that would have been incorrect. You know, persons may be congenial and yet widely different."

" Undoubtedly," said Rosina; " certain persons suit each other, as certain shapes fit into each other. It is not necessary that they should be exactly alike, for two globular figures, you know, will not fit together, turn them which way you will;—nor yet that they should be absolutely different, for a circular counter will never fit into a triangle;—but a triangle and a square may be joined, and a circle may be fitted into a crescent, and so may a lively mind be adapted to a serious, and a warm, passionate temper to one which is sweet and even."

" Quite a mathematical illustration," said Lewis, with a smile. " Do you think," returned he, after a pause, " that you could be happy in the way that Hannah is?"

" No—not unless we were to change minds."

" I thought so," said Lewis, with a sigh.

"I mean," said Rosina, "that I could not, otherwise, be happy as the wife of such a man as Mr. Russell. I esteem him with my whole heart; yet in spite of this, we should be like the square and the round counter—I am naturally quick, he is naturally slow; we should never keep step. Then, I have always been too much accustomed to consider him as a tutor, confessor, and censor general. Besides which, there is such an immense difference between our ages."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Lewis, "I understand that; it is perfectly natural; what I meant was, could you be happy in Hannah's circumstances as far as regards fortune, society, and situation, without changing minds?"

"Unquestionably I could. The change would delight me beyond all things."

"What!" exclaimed he, "are you so soon tired of being an heiress?"

"What advantage does that procure for me, beyond living in a finer house and having more pocket money? I should like it very well if I had been brought up to it, I dare say; and at first, I thought it was a fine thing to be able to buy every pretty trinket that pleased me, and to give away half-crowns and half-sovereigns, with as little inconvenience as I had formerly bestowed halfpence.

But, alas, my old habits are too inveterate; and now that the novelty has worn off, I assure you I often regret the exchange."

"And, pray," inquired he, with great interest, "what are those old habits which you so much regret?"

"You would laugh at me if I were to tell you."

"No, indeed! Nothing would be farther from my thoughts!"

"How can you tell that beforehand?" said she. "I have a great mind to put your risible propensities to the test; only that I am afraid I shall lower myself in your opinion—"

"No danger of that, Rosina!—"

"How can you tell beforehand? How very ready inquisitive people are to make promises!—Well;—now that I am a young lady of fortune, I seldom do a stitch of needlework. Cummings keeps my wardrobe in order, and all my bonnets and dresses are made up at the milliner's. I should be stared at and laughed at if I were caught by morning visitors in the act of cutting out a gown, or trimming a hat. Besides which, one soon learns to follow Lord Holland's maxim of 'never do any thing for yourself, when you can get any one to do it for you.' Thus I have lost what was once a pleasant as well as a useful employment."

"A serious misfortune, certainly! Is this the only one?"

"You promised you would not laugh. No, this is not all. In the second place, I can no longer roam at will through lanes and over commons, with cloak, pattens, and umbrella, or a gown too coarse to be caught in the briars. I am told 'it would not be proper.' What is worse, my half-crowns and half-sovereigns seem to give no more pleasure and do no more good than my halfpence did formerly, when I was treated more as a companion than a patroness: nor is the mere gift of money so serviceable, I am convinced, as superintendence and sympathy. Now, if any poor soul requires broth, jelly, or Iceland moss, it must be prepared by the cook; whereas, in former days, I made it myself. It *may* taste equally well, but 'my occupation is gone,' and less pride and pleasure accrue to giver and receiver. These are real vexations to me, Lewis, though to you they seem very absurd."

"Far from it," said Lewis, seriously. "It seems then, Rosina, that you regret Summerfield."

"It is ridiculous for me to talk of regret, when I have every thing that ought to make me happy. Yet I fear I am not of quite so contented a disposition as I once thought I was—I regret

Summerfield;' yet even there, I was not always happy—"

"Not happy at Summerfield, Rosina?"

"At least," said she, correcting herself, "I used sometimes to wish *then* for things which I have since found, cannot bestow much real pleasure; and I had often reason to be vexed and dissatisfied with myself for acting heedlessly."

"Rosina,—" said Lewis,—"do you ever look back, then, on your conduct with self reproach?"

"Often," said she, in a low voice.

"Have you ever," said he, faulteringly, and taking her hand, "have you ever regretted what passed between us the last time we saw each other at Summerfield?"

Rosina's colour went and came, though he was unable to see it, and tears started into her eyes. "Lewis," said she at length, in a low and trembling voice, "I have—I do regret it."

"And have I ever been happy since?" exclaimed Lewis, with emotion. "Have I ever ceased to love you?"

Alas, before he had poured forth half his soul, they reached Park Place; for this was no season for lingering by moonlight—and Lewis, looking more brilliantly handsome than he had ever done in his life, entered Mr. Parkinson's drawing-room; and Rosina with throbbing heart, and "smiles that

had as well been tears," commenced her duties at the tea-table. Lewis immediately accepted Mr. Parkinson's invitation to remain, and saved Rosina the trouble of answering questions by talking as rapidly as possible of the Ponsonbys, Dr. Knollys, Miss Mackau, the weather, and the times. Mrs. Wellford quietly commented on the excitation of his look and manner, as well as on Rosina's downcast silence. After tea, Mr. Parkinson challenged his sister-in-law to a game of backgammon; and Lewis now became as unwontedly silent as he had lately been the reverse; sat with his elbow on the table and his eyes shaded by his hand, and directed towards Rosina who was industriously netting, till he rose to wish good night. Rosina then exchanged her netting for a book, but Mrs. Wellford remarked that she never turned over the page. However, she was not so unkind as to ask her what she was reading, and left Rosina to seek her confidence in her own good time.

And now it may be thought, the lovers had nothing to do but to buy a wedding ring. Alas! the true love even of Rosina Wellford and Lewis Pennington, was not yet destined to run smooth. What impediment to their being lawfully joined in the bands of holy matrimony unexpectedly presented itself, I am now to declare.

CHAPTER XXII.

LA BELLE ALLIANCE.

Do what she would, Rosina could not make up her mind to confess the truth to her mother this night; and she might perhaps have even continued her uneasy silence the following morning, had not the dread of momentarily beholding Lewis, and of his explaining matters rather more abruptly than was altogether desirable, merged the lesser fear in the greater. Having seen her uncle set out on his morning ride, she found herself alone with her mother; and would have given five guineas—five? say ten, twenty, and her little finger into the bargain, for something that might directly or indirectly lead to the point. Nothing of the sort offered itself; she sat at the breakfast room window, looking out on the gravel walk which ran towards the rectory, with colour growing deeper and deeper every moment; and she had just screwed her courage to the sticking point, when Mrs. Wellford quietly asked her why she had given up her usual ride with her uncle?

"I did not wish to go out this morning, mamma."

"Do you not feel well, my dear?"

"Perfectly well, I thank you, mamma. I wished to speak to you—"

Here Rosina's speech entirely forsook her. She remained looking out on the gravel walk, and wondering what her mother must think of her, when she felt an arm placed very gently round her neck. Strange to say, she bent down to kiss the hand, and began to shed tears.

Rosina was soon able to give an intelligible explanation; and Mrs. Wellford was very happy, and only wondered that the offer had not been made before. Rosina coloured and sighed: it was a moment of unreserved confidence; and without much difficulty, her mother drew from her an account of all that had occurred at Summerfield. Mrs. Wellford ought to have been tempted to scold her for her excessively hard usage of her lover; but she was not at this instant inclined to be very angry with any one, and she consoled herself by remembering that it was as well for the engagement to have been delayed, as they had then been much too young to marry, and their characters had had time to acquire strength and steadiness in the interim. She was dwelling on Lewis's excellences when Lewis himself entered, glowing with hap-

piness. He had avowed his attachment to his parents, who had given it their full approbation; and Marianne had been made almost as happy as himself.

"And how will you reconcile yourself to Rosina's living in London?" said he gaily to Mrs. Wellford.

"Why *should* you live there, when you have enough between you to live in easy circumstances here?"

"What! give up the law! The dear, delightful study of the law?"

"Ah, Lewis! Ambition, I see, will soon cure you of love."

In the evening, Marianne accompanied her brother to Park Place, and joyfully threw herself into Rosina's arms. Mr. Parkinson looked rather astonished at so remarkable a demonstration of affection, but composed himself to sleep, leaving the girls to murmur their sotto voce expressions of mutual attachment. Lewis intended to make the formal demand of Rosina's hand the following morning, as a matter of course, when her uncle should be wide awake; but Mrs. Wellford in the fullness of her heart, was beforehand with him, in telling (what she concluded Mr. Parkinson would consider) the good news.

"Lewis Pennington propose to my niece Ro-

sina?" repeated he, rubbing his eyes, as if to convince himself that he was not still dreaming. "Why, my dear Mrs. Wellford, it can't be!—Don't you know that Rosina is my niece, and that I am her guardian, and that her fortune depends on her marrying with my consent?"

"Undoubtedly, my dear sir, but what possible objection can you have to so excellent a young man as Lewis Pennington?"

"Objection to Lewis Pennington?" repeated Mr. Parkinson, opening his eyes very wide—"none in the world! I've no objection to him as a man—I only object to him as a match—He must n't stand in the way of my nephew, James Parkinson!"

Rosina had entered the room during this dialogue. "James Parkinson!" repeated she in dismay.

"My dear sir," said Mrs. Wellford, "your nephew has made no pretensions to Rosina."

"But indeed you are quite mistaken there," said he with a confident air. "James is very much in love with her, I can assure you. Has not he been here two or three times, courting?"

"Oh uncle, you are quite in the wrong!" cried Rosina.

"I have much better authority than you can have, Rosina," replied her uncle, "for saying

that I am quite in the right. So far back as the first time he came here after poor Mrs. Parkinson's death, (a parenthetical sigh,) I observed to him one day after dinner what a nice wife you would make him, to which he assented; and after that, he was always riding about with you and paying you attention."

"I am sure, sir, he meant nothing by it; and if he did, it would make no difference in the present case."

"But I can tell you what *will* make a difference, and a very considerable difference," said Mr. Parkinson with more displeasure than Rosina had ever seen him display before.—"It was poor Mrs. Parkinson's dying injunction," he proceeded in a solemn tone of voice, "that I should never give my consent to your marrying any one else, so long as there was a chance of your having James."

"Luckily," said Rosina quickly, "there is no such chance, for I am sure he does not care for me."

"I am sure," said her uncle with simplicity, "he has paid you more attentions than I ever paid poor Mrs. Parkinson. However, the question can soon be settled, for I can write to ask him to let us know his mind."

"Whatever his mind may be," said Rosina hastily, "it can make no alteration in mine; and

I would rather forfeit my aunt's legacy at once than submit to such an indignity."

"Hush, hush, my dearest Rosina," said her mother, "remember Lewis."

"Lewis does not care for my fortune," replied Rosina.

"But should not *you* care for it for his sake."

A tear started into Rosina's eyes. "Ah, uncle," said she, "I never thought you would be so unkind."

"My dear, I mean it all for the best," said he, rather touched by the gracious signs of sweet remorse which trembled on her eyelashes, "but I can't see poor James ill used, or break my promise to poor Mrs. Parkinson."

"Well, sir, write to him then," said Rosina, whose cheek flushed at the humiliating thought of being offered to him. "But do not suppose that in the event of his declaring himself a suitor of mine, I shall for a moment think of renouncing Lewis."

"It will be time enough to settle that point when his answer comes," said Mr. Parkinson.

Rosina wished him good night with less than her usual cordiality, and retired to her room with a full heart. Her mother was almost as much vexed and surprised as herself.

The next morning, Rosina met Lewis with

clouded looks. "Ah, Lewis," said she, "my uncle has refused his consent."

"Has he?" cried Lewis. "Well, then, Rosina, we shall only have to sketch out rather a humble plan for our future establishment, that is all. I must apply myself diligently to my business; and with *you* to work hard for, who can doubt my perseverance and success? Industry and love will bestow new attractions on each other."

"But who would have expected this, from my uncle? It will be painful to act in defiance of the wishes of one who has hitherto been so invariably kind. But, perhaps," exclaimed she, with a brightening countenance, "Mr. James Parkinson will not have me!"

Lewis looked surprised, and she then explained to him the obstacle which had caused her uncle to withhold his consent. Lewis was indignant, and hurt at her having submitted to the inquiry. He was fully persuaded that James Parkinson could not be indifferent to so inestimable a prize, and regarded her uncle's consent as hopeless. Rosina's assurances that the answer, whatever it might be, would have no influence on her affections, at length subdued a pang of rising jealousy.

Dr. and Mrs. Pennington called in the course

of the day. Their affectionate reception of Rosina was most gratifying; the more so, that it did not spring from false views of her prospects; for before her entrance, Mrs. Wellford had acquainted them with Mrs. Parkinson's singular injunction to her husband.

"Lewis will have to struggle through the world as thousands of young men have done before him," said the doctor, "and he will be all the better for it. If Rosina is not, in his opinion, worth as long a servitude as Jacob endured for Rachel, I shall be ashamed of the boy; and by that time perhaps, his constancy and industry will have mollified Mr. Parkinson."

Jacob's apprenticeship! thought Lewis, starting from his seat and walking to the window with a little discontent, "we may be all dead and buried by that time!" His father was not serious, however, in supposing such a long term of probation.

Certainly, Mr. Parkinson was the last man in the world whom any body would have dreamed of as likely to stand in the way of an amiable young couple's happiness. However, there is no judging of those very quiet people till they are tried,—and after all, we must go back to first causes, and consider Mr. Parkinson only as the agent of a woman, who had resolved to exercise the same

tyranny after her death, as during her life. James Parkinson seemed determined to prolong the lovers' suspense as much as he could, by delaying to answer the letter. Daily did Rosina examine the directions to her uncle from his various correspondents, in hopes of seeing his nephew's illegible scrawl; and daily was she disappointed. At length the important communication arrived; and Mr. Parkinson, having uttered a louder exclamation of surprise than Rosina thought the case required, whichever way the question might be decided, read the letter through a second time with provoking slowness, and then handed it to her, with the ejaculation of "Well! I shall never be surprised again!" In spite of the "*illegible scrawl*," Rosina hastily read as follows.

CARLTON CHAMBERS,
June 16th.

DEAR UNCLE,

I received yours this day week. In consequence of your inquiry, I'm obliged to divulge a little secret which I meant to have kept to myself a month or two longer, for the fun of the thing. With respect to your question, do I mean to marry Miss Rosina Wellford? I answer candidly, I do not; and for a good reason—because I'm married already! There's news for you! On Tuesday se'nnight, I led Miss Spanker to the hy-

meneal altar—the girl, you know, that came out this season in Belvidera. A tremendously fine woman, highly accomplished, and makes fifty pounds a night. Of course, while that's the case, it would be a pity to take her off the stage, so we're mum about the marriage, and she is still printed Miss Spanker on the play bills. I'm a tremendously lucky fellow, I know, to have her, for she has refused scores of lovers; and of course it is very gratifying to a husband's feelings to hear her three times a week draw down thunders of unbounded applause. I shall bring her down to see you when the season is over, and I am sure you will like her amazingly. She's of good family and keeps her own carriage. By the by, I left a little toothpick case behind me at Park Place that I don't want to lose. Please to inquire about it of the maids, and if they can't find it, rate them tremendously. We're going to have Pasta and Malibran this spring, and perhaps Taglioni.

I remain

Your affectionate nephew,

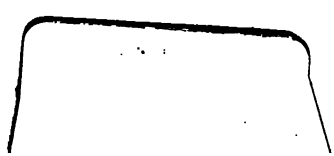
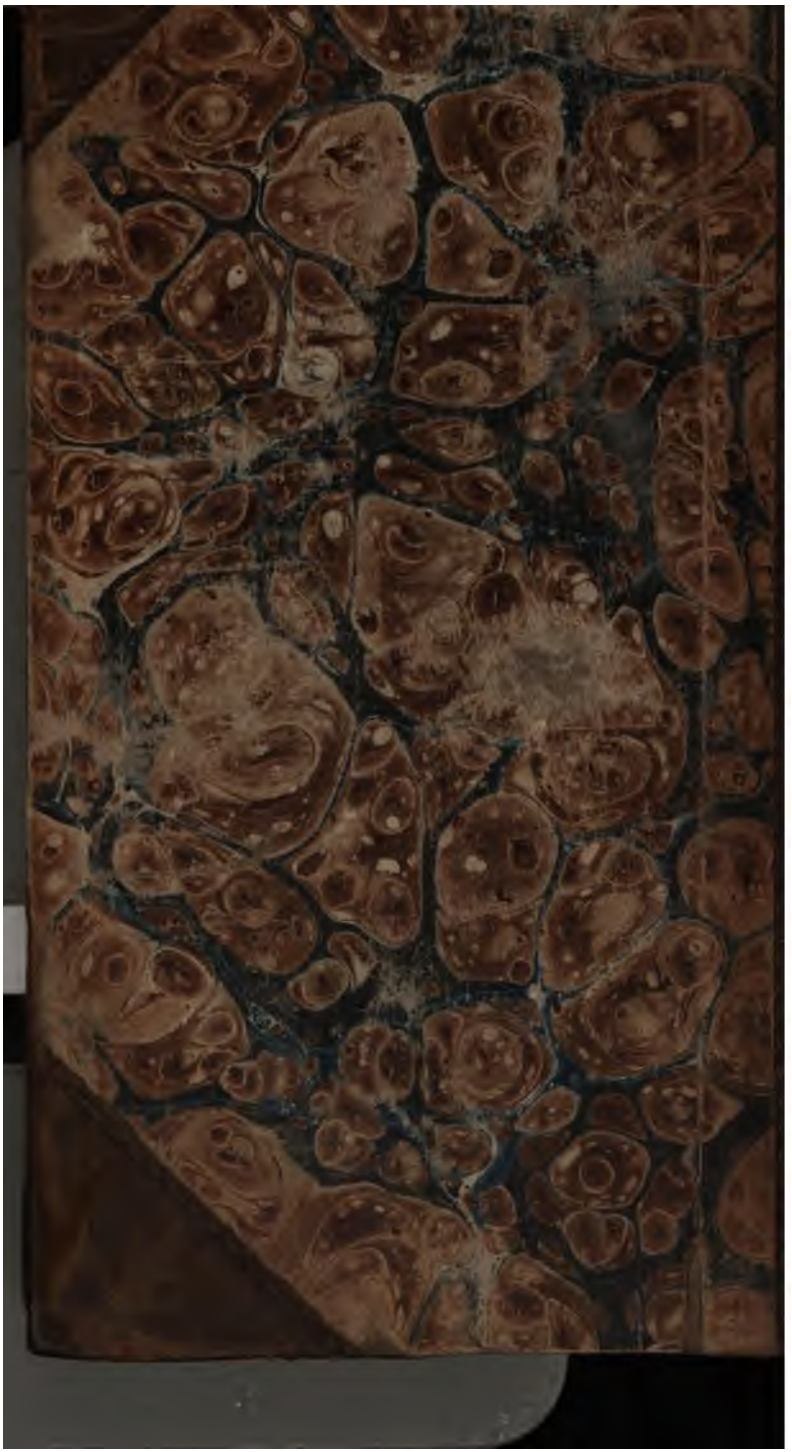
JAMES PARKINSON, Junr.

P. S. I suppose by your writing to me about Rosina, she fancied my attentions were serious. I should have thought she might have guessed I was only flirting with her *pour passer le temps.*

"Oh, you charming Mr. James Parkinson," exclaimed Rosina with transport, "how delighted I am that your amiable character is now fully developed! All the epistles in volume No. 1 of the Elegant Extracts are worthless in my estimation compared with this enchanting letter! My dear uncle," said she in a calmer voice, becoming suddenly aware that her rejoicings could not be very acceptable to him, "I hope I have not displeased you.—You must excuse me for being rather wild with joy at such a moment as this! You give your consent now, dear uncle, do not you?"

"Yes," said he with a sigh and a smile, as he took the soft hand that rested on his shoulder and affectionately kissed it. "I believe I must look for more happiness in the marriage of my niece than in that of my nephew. You are a good girl, Rosina, and deserve to have your own way; which most of your sex contrive to obtain, first or last. But one stipulation I make—Lewis shall not take you away from me. He must give up the law and accept Elderton into the bargain!"

The reader will easily imagine that Lewis found this proviso an insurmountable obstacle to his marrying Rosina.

THE END.

G. Woodfall, Printer, Angel Court, Skinner Street, London.